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JONATHAN CAPE

REDBRICK REVISITED—I

D. W. BROGAN

A HUNDRED years ago, as we have frequently been reminded this year, London put on the Great Exhibition. Less noted at the time and since, 1851 saw the foundation of what was to become Manchester University. Yet Owens College and the Great Exhibition had a great deal in common and each represented an important side of the great Victorian renaissance. The allocation of the profits of the Exhibition to the promotion of science and art, like the great benefaction of John Owens, represented a criticism of the existing provision for science and learning, represented the protest of important bodies kept out of the older universities, and represented a criticism of their curriculum as well as of their exclusiveness. True, that criticism did not first take institutional form in either the allocation of the Exhibition profits or the foundation of Owens College. There had been plenty of criticism in England, plenty of projects in Manchester. University College in London, with its double Scottish and German ancestry, marked the first effective attempt in England to get round the Anglican monopoly of the higher education. But 1851 was a climacteric year all the same and it is fitting that 'Bruce Truscot' should, in the centenary year, produce a new version of his two famous tracts, that Professor Charlton should provide a portrait of the oldest and most famous of the 'provincial' universities, and that the University Grants Committee should, in its somewhat austere returns, make it possible to see what the state is doing for the university structure which, in 1851, got its last characteristic unit, the local college attempting to create local university standards.

There were in 1851 Oxford and Cambridge, two London colleges, University and King's, Durham (an imitation of Oxford and Cambridge) and five Scottish institutions of university rank.¹ There are now twenty-three higher institutions or federations of institutions spending annually nearly £23,000,000. Institutions so numerous and so expensive deserve some study and both 'Bruce Truscot' and Professor Charlton serve the commonwealth although in very different ways, by their books.² 'Bruce Truscot' is what is

¹ King's College and Marischal College had not yet been united to form the present University of Aberdeen.

² BRUCE TRUSCOT, *Red Brick University*, Pelican Books.

R. B. CHARLTON, *Portrait of a University*, Manchester University Press.

Returns from Universities and University Colleges in Receipt of Treasury Grants Academic Year 1949-50, His Majesty's Stationery Office.

called 'challenging'. He finds a great deal that is wrong, he has firm and simple ideas of how to remedy what is wrong, and he appeals to a good deal that is sensible and responsible in academic public opinion and in general public opinion, as well as to a great deal that is shallow, unreflective and confused. With Professor Charlton's book we are on a different level of urbanity, of sagacity and of utility. For he has set out to do something very difficult indeed, to show the spirit of a great institution in its history and to see its problems both from the inside and from the outside. The result is a rare thing in English writing, something like a good French *éloge*, wise, ironical, persuasive and the *éloge* of a successful institution, not the easier success of the *éloge* of a man.

It is because the merits of the two books are so different in kind and, indeed, in quality, that they are so admirably complementary. The *Portrait of a University* answers, implicitly as well as explicitly, many of the questions posed by *Red Brick* and, better still, it makes some of them intelligible.

Professor Charlton is able to do this because of the admirably historical approach of his book. It is not, and does not pretend to be, a detailed history of the first hundred years of Manchester University; that desirable work is not yet written. But it does set a great and living institution in its historical place in the past and in the present, in the society and region which produced it and whose service is its primary purpose and, this being done, Professor Charlton is able, in no spirit of blind optimism indeed, to assess the degree of success that the university has had in its century of life. And since Manchester is the first and most famous of the group of institutions that 'Bruce Truscot' discusses in their present state, Professor Charlton's book is indispensable for a profitable use of 'Bruce Truscot's'. And the superiority of Professor Charlton's book is due to his far more adequate historical sense. He, like 'Bruce Truscot', is a professor of English, but he, unlike 'Bruce Truscot', is an historian as well. And the result of that superiority is that it is almost easier to understand the peculiar position of Oxford and Cambridge from Professor Charlton's book on Manchester than from 'Bruce Truscot's' book on the whole university system.

Red Brick is a deeply unhistorical work. For example, it would have been useful to have had some brief narrative of the various foundations. How far did one of the new universities spring from a local movement? How far, as in Manchester, was the foundation made possible, sooner than would otherwise have been likely, by a great gift like the £100,000 left by John Owens? How far was one of the new colleges a fairly conscious imitation of the other, as Mason College, Birmingham, was of Owens College, Manchester? How far were there great family benefactions like those of the Wills family in

Bristol, and of the Boot family in Nottingham? How far was local pride, municipal emulation the chief driving force? And in all these cases, how far (if it can be estimated) was the new foundation meeting a deeply felt local need?

It can be said, of course, that we ought to have the same information about Oxford and Cambridge. But we have, in fact, in our common stock of knowledge, more knowledge of Oxbridge than of Redbrick, more books like Winstanley and Mallet — and Redbrick is the problem 'Bruce Truscot' is discussing, not Oxbridge. There are variations in the traditions, in the objects, in the success of the various universities and colleges that go to make up Redbrick and it would have been useful to have had them described in outline, if only to save the common reader from the belief that they are interchangeable parts on an academic assembly line.

But 'Bruce Truscot's' approach is unhistorical in a far deeper sense than this. He sees the problem of Redbrick *versus* Oxbridge in almost complete isolation from the general social history of England. If it is astonishing that medieval England had only two universities and that Scotland had three, it is also astonishing that medieval England had only two ecclesiastical provinces and that medieval Ireland had four. It is astonishing that the province of York had no university and Canterbury two. It is also astonishing that, with minor exceptions, there was only one bar, only one set of High Courts centred in London. It is astonishing, in fact, that medieval England should have been so centralized. Oxford and Cambridge are examples of a general mark of English medieval society. It is, perhaps, more genuinely astonishing that there should have been no analogue to the university of Paris in London. But it should be remembered that two of the most important schools of a medieval or modern university were in London, law and medicine. We should not be more astonished at the absence of universities north of Trent, than at the absence of Inns of Court or royal residences. (Leaving out the Stuarts, did any King or Queen of England from Henry VII to George IV ever cross the Trent?)

It is because of this past history, that the draining of northern talent to Oxford and Cambridge began and has continued. The connections between old schools and Oxbridge colleges is the most natural thing in the world and that it should be imitated by more modern northern schools is natural, if not quite so natural. The concentration of the higher learning in London and its territory was as natural as the foundation of the Royal Society in the capital or the concentration of the theatre there in Elizabeth's time. Provincial boys of academic talent and ambition were sucked into Oxford and Cambridge as Shakespeare or Samuel Johnson or David Garrick were sucked into London.

This truth was possibly hidden in the nineteenth century by a number of extraneous circumstances that made it appear to the not very curious contemporary, that what marked off Oxbridge from the mass of the country was its religious and social exclusiveness. The religious exclusiveness, though incomplete as far as Cambridge was concerned and mitigated, as far as the Oxford Scots were concerned, by an extremely Latitudinarian view (exemplified in the Oxford career of Archbishop Tait) was a reality and, by the nineteenth century, an anomaly. But the social exclusiveness was really of very brief duration. The Cambridge to which Samuel Butler went was not 'democratic' in the modern sense, and the sizarship system is offensive to the modern spirit, but it was not exclusive. Most undergraduates belonged to the prosperous classes but there were a good many really poor men in both Oxford and Cambridge. Most successful barristers had some private resources, but some poor men became judges, even Chief Justices. Commissions were sold in the army but some men rose from the ranks. Again, the two ancient universities were not isolated phenomena, but typical representative institutions of the English society produced by the Reformation, the Civil War, and the two Revolutions (political and industrial). So were the new universities.

That the new universities are new, palpably new, is a disadvantage in a traditional country like England where new things must be given old names. And there *is* in the prestige of Oxford and Cambridge something odd, if they are seen from the outside. Age for example has something to do with the prestige of Paris, but not a great deal, the two *grandes écoles* that are most admired, Polytechnique and Normale, are modern institutions. Neither Berlin nor Bonn bowed the head before Heidelberg or Leipzig because of their youth; and if Leyden (because of its special place in the national epic) is the most famous of Dutch universities, Utrecht, Groningen or the rest are not in the least 'Redbrick' in appearance or feeling. Age is only part of the special position of Oxford and Cambridge and it is not merely or mainly because they are old that they can give the appearance (which 'Bruce Truscot' takes for the reality) of thwarting the growth of the new universities. It is a pity, then, that the Scottish universities, especially Glasgow and Edinburgh, are only mentioned in passing, for their age does not alter their fundamental character; they are city universities serving mainly a geographical region less than the whole of Britain, and they are for all practical purposes, non-residential.¹

¹ Apart from certain inherited physical assets and the real but indefinable difference of tradition (which arises as much from the fact that they are Scottish, as that they are old), I can think of only one important difference relevant to this discussion. The Scottish schools are not as regularly 'milked' of their best pupils by Oxford and Cambridge colleges as is the case in England. Other advantages,

The same can be said of London. London University is federal; that is a result, though not an inevitable result, of the size of London. Then, it is in London; and London would be a great academic centre if there were no university in it at all. But again its problems are those of the modern non-residential university and if its constituency is wider-spread, it is all the same basically regional. Colonial and foreign students, medical students coming to the hospitals from Oxford and Cambridge, even an occasional wandering Scot like young Alexander Fleming, do not alter the basic 'home counties' character of London.

It is a pity, therefore, that Scotland and London are not dealt with in *Red Brick* for they share common problems; and the problems that do not arise from their local and non-residential character, they share with Oxford and Cambridge. There is, that is to say, a university question and there are university questions, varying from place to place and from group to group. 'Bruce Truscot' deals, in fact, with both types but his book suffers from the self-imposed limitation that makes of Redbrick a class by itself set off against Oxbridge.

It is more profitable to begin with the second class of problems because they raise less institutional heat. If Redbrick mismanages its examination system, its appointments system and its provision for research, it cannot blame Oxbridge, except for setting a bad example. But the remedy is in its own hands: even the absurd systems of government described by 'Bruce Truscot' could be altered if there was a vigorous Redbrick opinion against them.

The first charge arises from 'Bruce Truscot's' conviction (which is not so much argued for, as given as an axiom) that the first duty of a university teacher is to be a researcher and that if he has to choose, he should choose research even at the cost of the neglect or even abandonment of teaching. I deny that this doctrine is axiomatic or even plausible. And it lies at the bottom of so much of 'Bruce Truscot's' doctrine that it needs examination. Of course, 'Bruce Truscot' is not foolish enough to assert that there is a necessary opposition between teaching and research, but he does think that in appointments, in university organization, in the ethos of the universities, research is neglected, regarded as a luxury and seldom given the pre-eminence it deserves. To make this point he sets up various straw men; the Oxbridge don with his fear of premature publication, his great unpublished work that, death shows, never to have existed; the Redbrick professor who, even if appointed because he had done research, quickly settles down to giving mechanical lectures, repeated to general boredom, devoting his real energies to golf and gardening,

even those arising from the traditional devotion to learning, are largely mythical. For example, Glasgow in its five hundred years of life has acquired less endowment than has Manchester in one hundred years.

visiting the university as little as possible and spending that time in unprofitable idleness. That such professors and such dons existed and exist is probably true. I don't think they are typical and I think they are even less typical than they were. ('Bruce Truscot' greatly underestimates, I won't say the pressure, but the encouragements to research afforded to young dons in Oxbridge today.) That some, perhaps most, of the university teachers should be doing research is possibly desirable. I am not quite sure. That those who are not doing any are necessarily in some way cheating the public and their pupils is nonsense. They may be; but they may also be doing a great deal of administrative work, examination work, teaching, and what can only be called 'influencing' work that the university needs and for which the most brilliant research is no substitute, either for the university or for the most important part of the university, the students. For if a student may be disconcerted and disillusioned by the discovery that a university teacher is not, in fact, plunged in profound and original work, he may also be disillusioned by the discovery that his teacher has successfully made himself master of a narrow field and has given up any attempt to keep the whole subject in conspectus and has nothing to give most of his students, including some of the most promising of them, but an introduction to a 'technique' that may be of little value outside this narrow field. No doubt hungry sheep look up and get only straw; they can also look up and get only caviare.

Whatever the linguistic history of *universitas*, it has meant primarily a teaching body. Its duty was and is no doubt to advance sound learning as well as impart it. No university that does only the second is doing its duty; but still less is a university, or a group of teachers, that is overwhelmingly concentrated on the first. For we can be quite sure that the government that provides most of the money expects most of it to go into teaching. If it did not, if it were primarily concerned with research, with techniques, there would be a very poor case indeed for having so many universities. A great deal of research has always been done, and more and more may be done, outside universities. It is done in the National Physical Laboratory. It is done in the British Museum, in the Public Record Office. Moreover, these institutions train researchers, they cannot help doing so, and a rationalized national plan of research would concentrate most of it in London, with special cases allowed for, like the government engineering research institute at Glasgow and the claims of the great libraries in Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh and Manchester. John Owens had a sounder idea of the functions of his new college than has 'Bruce Truscot'. Manchester University has been, almost from the beginning, a great centre of research in arts subjects as well as in the sciences. But its primary duty has been the instruction of the

young men and then the young women of the region, in the sciences and the arts at the stage they had reached, not in Manchester necessarily, but in the modern world. True, there have been times when the 'Truscot' doctrine has been preached. But as Professor Charlton points out, even that rigorist, T. F. Tout, did not quite live up to his theories and it was fortunate that he did not.

Then it is very obvious from *Red Brick University* that 'Bruce Truscot', despite verbal protestations, thinks of research in literary terms. The examples he gives are of editing, 'appreciating' literary works; that some disciplines are not susceptible of this kind of research is ignored. A dictionary maker, the editor of a text, the historian at a certain stage of his work, may be able to put in a useful hour every day between *The Times* or the *Manchester Guardian* and his first lecture. But can a philosopher or a mathematician profitably do so? As Professor Charlton reminds us, Samuel Alexander always insisted that thinking is research and thinking cannot be turned on and off as is suggested here.

It is also evident that, by research, 'Bruce Truscot' means publication or, in the case of scientists, some discovery. He is shocked when he looks up a list of university teachers and finds that in a given group there is a miserably low production of books and even of articles. Until we know much more than the bare figures, we cannot decide whether a low publication rate is a bad thing or not. There are, for example, at least two hundred teachers of philosophy in the universities of Great Britain. Do we want two hundred new philosophical articles plus twenty or thirty philosophical books a year? Heaven forbid! A philosopher may well do his full duty by being keen, critical and abreast of the present state of the problems of philosophy. Of course, for the whole field of philosophy that is not enough. We need original philosophers and we need original scholars going back to Kant or St Thomas, but I doubt if we need (and I am sure we can't get) two hundred of them. What we do need is the infusion of philosophical method and criticism into our university studies, what we do need is a give-and-take between the resident philosophers and the students, and that may well be a full-time academic job and education.

Then, 'Bruce Truscot' ignores the fact that one good idea, one really original discovery may be all that a university teacher is capable of. We cannot expect a series of discoveries from every university teacher and we might be much worse off if we made every university teacher pretend to be permanently productive. After all, there are nearly 8000 of them.¹ It is not necessarily a proof of moral turpitude when a professor who in the past has done good and even brilliant work, ceases to do so. He may have said all he has to say

¹ 7,930, in the last return. There are probably 8,000 now.

and is surely better employed in teaching, even teaching the discoveries made by greater or younger men, than in grinding out printable material. In some subjects this is a necessity of the case. We are told, on high authority, that 'mathematics, more than any other art or science, is a young man's game'. Are mathematical professors to be put out to grass at forty, assumed to be of no further use because they cannot hope to be real discoverers any longer?¹

But it is not only mathematicians who cease to be 'productive'. Temperament, the growth of other interests, the failure of organizing power, all may account for an apparent sterility. But the sterility may be only apparent. A few articles, one or two brief monographs may be more valuable than the bulky productions of less original scholars and teachers. I could give examples of that from my own field and from among the living. But it is easier to cite the dead. The total production of the late Frederick Jackson Turner was small and some of it, I think, not of the first quality. But he was a figure of the first importance in American historiography, not only because of his small production, or because part of it is of first rate quality, but because of his leadership in the long and not very 'productive' years at Harvard.

It has seemed worth while insisting upon this point, not only because it is basic to 'Bruce Truscot's' idea of the function of the university, Redbrick and Oxbridge alike, but because of the remedy he proposes, his attack on academic security of tenure. Briefly, university appointments are not to be permanent. Professors are to be appointed for periods of ten years and to be dismissed if production is not satisfactory. More than that, they are not to be appointed unless they can produce a scheme for ten year's research, 'mapped out in advance'. The second proposal needs little discussion; like nearly all 'Bruce Truscot's' specific references to university work it assumes that all kinds of research are much of a muchness, can be planned in advance and worked on to a time-table. This is not so. Of course research can be spun out and there might be advantages in being a slow worker; but in certain fields, only a foolish man would propose to plan ten years' research in advance. And that is true or may be true not only of mathematics or philosophy, but of many other subjects. It is, of course, easy to choose a text to edit, and maybe a bulky text. There is Dekker; there is Silius Italicus; there is Ponson du Terail or Stendhal or Montes-

¹ G. H. HARDY, *A Mathematician's Apology*, p. 10. Mathematicians are, perhaps, a special case. It is not accidental that the most learned student of Bernard Shaw in America is a mathematician or that one of the most learned American military historians is a mathematician. It has been said that mathematicians and anatomists are particularly prone to trespass into other fields of learning, mathematicians because their subject exhausts them, anatomists because they exhaust their subject.

quieu; there is Pope, there is Elkanah Settle. A brilliant man can do something with Elkanah Settle, a dull man can make a mess of Pope; but each can pass the time away in an academic treadmill. But real research in some fields has this risk attached to it: you may find nothing. That is obviously true of the natural sciences; their history is full of false starts by great men. It is true in other fields; real research often means finding that the thing you are looking for isn't there; it also often means finding something that you hadn't the least idea was there. What on the 'Truscot' scheme is the university teacher to do? Go back to the committee, apologize and resign or offer another ten-year plan?

More important is the proposal for temporary appointments. A simple reaction of horror isn't good enough. There is nothing sacred or unalterable about life appointments to Chairs and what is, in practice, life election to college fellowships. All organized bodies are to some degree vested interests and semi-blind to the beam in their own eye. We all tend to be rigorous reformers of other people's business. And it is far from unknown for a rigorous, not to say rabid political reformer to be, as an academic, a stout Tory. We tend to be like the Duke in *Lothair*: 'He was opposed to all privilege, and indeed, to all orders of men, except dukes who were a necessity. He was also strongly in favour of the equal division of all property except land.' Dons are like dukes.

It is easy to make a case for the 'Truscot' reform. Academic history is rich in elections that sterilized the subject in a given university for an academic lifetime. Much more serious than mistakes made by examiners are mistakes made by electors and it would be optimistic to suppose that none are made now. Sometimes the mistake becomes so obvious that there is practical unanimity about it—except for the views of the professor in question. He may be coaxed into retirement, even bribed into retirement (there is at least one case of that in a not very remote period of time). He may just hang on, cultivating his garden or his hobby. Then a professor may turn out to be wrong-headed, not idle, but cranky. He may divert the teaching (and research) of his department into sterile fields. All of these are real dangers much more dangerous, it may be pointed out, in universities organized on 'Bruce Truscot's' admired departmental system, than in the oligarchic, inchoate organizations of Oxbridge. There may well be cases of the disease. Is the risk of the disease enough to justify the remedy.¹

¹ A professor who is neither idle nor cranky may yet distort the whole work of his department by exclusive devotion to his own research which may be of the highest order but not relevant to the main needs of the university. See the extremely interesting article by Professor A. R. UBELHODE in *Universities Quarterly*, March 1951.

First of all, the reasons for the life tenure of professorships and of most other academic jobs are utilitarian. Security of tenure is a method of attracting to the academic profession persons who might otherwise choose other careers with other rewards. Secondly, security of tenure is thought desirable in professors for the reasons it is thought desirable, in Britain, in judges and parsons. There is, again, nothing sacred in this principle. Jesuits and Methodists don't believe that the pastoral relationship should be for life; most continental countries and most American states haven't judicial security in our sense.¹ But the British tradition is that certain jobs are, on the whole, better served, if those who hold them have a secure tenure. Notoriously, some parsons are scandals and more are nuisances. Notoriously, some judges are the despair or the ironical delight of the bar. (The opinion of litigants is not asked for.) Nevertheless, the good is held to outweigh the ill.

The position becomes clearer if we look at 'Bruce Truscot's' remedy. It is based on the assumption that some body or some individual is competent to judge the work of another academic in the same field. He may be, but he may not be. For one thing, originality may be disturbing; and if it is possible for a mathematician or a physicist to see at once that X is a young man of great promise, in other subjects it is not so easy, and not all academic bodies act on what a great French scholar told me was the principle of the Collège de France, the encouragement of heresy. But a more serious objection arises, again, from the mechanical character of 'Bruce Truscot's' definition of research and his apparent failure to consider the problems of subjects that are not purely literary or, indeed, to consider the problems of literary subjects other than English. Confident as he is that he can assess the work of colleagues, he says things, in passing, that make that confidence seem ill-founded. For example, he notes, with horror, that some people might write a novel instead of doing original research. But this is surely odd from a professor of English? Writing a novel, even a bad novel, might be very educational indeed, much better for the professor and for his pupils than one of the standard studies of influence or 'chatter about Harriet'. Can we think that Columbia University was foolish enough to think that Professor Trilling was wasting his time in writing a good novel, or even would have been wasting his time if he had written a bad one? More serious is the implication that there is

¹ It is worth noting that in some American states where judicial tenure is not for life, a gentleman's agreement between the leaders of the bar and the political parties, results in effect, in life tenure. And one of the interesting and, so far, reasonably successful innovations of the constitution of the Fourth Republic in France is the Council of the Magistracy — an attempt to avoid some of the abuses of the old system of judicial promotion for 'merit'.

a known, clearly-bounded field in which the productive scholar is to work. It would be possible to give many examples of the dangers of this view but one will suffice since it concerns one of the glories of Redbrick, the late C. E. Vaughan. He was Professor of English at Leeds (where Professor Charlton was one of his pupils) and, in that role, wrote what were regarded as useful books in the field of English literature. Outside the small group of specialists, they are forgotten, even if they are remembered by them. When he retired, he retired not to Oxford (though or because he was a Balliol man), but to Manchester. There he produced his great edition of the *Political Writings of J.-J. Rousseau* and the essays which were published as preliminary studies. What would have been Vaughan's fate if he had been asked to outline his ten-year plan on his appointment to Leeds or if he had announced later what he was doing and had to explain to a 'Bruce Truscot' of the time that he was actually intruding into the field of political theory (and of French language)?

It is the inevitable weakness of any institution that it must, in some ways, be wasteful. The number of original minds is far fewer than 'Bruce Truscot' thinks, or perhaps his notion of what is originality is more generous than mine. We must contemplate not a small group of Maitlands and Rutherfords, Alexanders and Vaughans, but a professional body of eight thousand members, recruited, as we are constantly being told, in increasingly severe competition with other professions. That is the reality with which Redbrick and Oxbridge have alike to deal. And there is the other reality of the eighty-five thousand students whose instruction and education, *pace* 'Bruce Truscot', is the first duty of the eight thousand teachers. And if we keep our eye on the ball, that is on the students, and are truthful to ourselves about their needs and potentialities, we shall reform the universities more effectually than if we pretend that we are dealing with the cream of the Academy, trained by that very 'unproductive' teacher, Socrates.

There is an obvious connection between 'Bruce Truscot's' exaltation of 'research' over 'teaching' and his criticisms of the present honours examination system. He thinks it unjust and arbitrary to assess the three or four years' work of a student in a week's examination. The candidate may be well below his form for physical reasons; he or she may be 'nervous', too wrought up over the importance of the examination, too prone (to use the late Professor Sir Walter Raleigh's example) to confuse the final honours examination with the day of judgment. All of these things are true and if examination results regularly contradicted the expectations of teachers and taught, there would be grounds for a root and branch reform. But they don't. We all know cases in which the examination results have startled the candidate and those who knew

him best by doing manifest injustice (or excessive justice). We all know of cases in which a candidate has done himself injustice, but in which the examiners (who have the reputation of the university to consider and the rights of the other candidates to allow for) simply could not give a class on 'promise' or 'ability' in face of the unsatisfactory performance. And if, in the academic world, the degree got at the 'final honours' stage were final, we would have to consider again the present system. But is it? Does, for example, an appointments committee simply disregard the claims of a candidate who hasn't got a First? Not if there are other claims to appointment. Does a Board of Studies refuse to accept as a research student a candidate who has got a Second or, in extreme cases, a Third but who yet has really impressive testimonials to his quality? Not in my experience.¹

On the other hand, there are cases of brilliant examinees who come to nothing, and that not only in the academic world. But we are surely asking too much of an examination, taken at twenty-two, when we ask it to classify a man for life. When 'Bruce Truscot' asks us 'what do we want the class which we award, the indelible seal which we set on our student to represent?' I should answer that we should not want to set an indelible seal and that if any body or any bodies are foolish enough to go on ranking a man for life by his class in the examination for the degree of B.A., they are silly people of whom we should take no notice. We are not setting an indelible seal. We are saying that, at such a stage in his education under known and equal conditions, Mr Verdant Green was classed so and so.²

This is not to say that the present examination system is perfect. Especially it is not to say that it is perfect for the purpose of selecting future university teachers. But that is not its main purpose. Perhaps it is not its purpose at all. But even if that be admitted (I should not go as far as that myself), some improvements could be suggested. There is a great deal to be said for allowing a candidate to put in evidence some piece of research work or some exercise that allows him to display qualities not necessarily called for in the examination

¹ If it were proper, I could name two professors of the highest eminence, one of whom got a Second and the other only barely got a First because an external examiner insisted. But no real harm was done to either and the examiners may not, at that moment, have been totally wrong. I think they probably were, but my opinion is of no value.

² Of course, many people, not formally silly, do act in this way. When Lord Curzon died, all his obituaries explained now it had come about that he had only got a Second. Curzon's temperament apart, there are political reasons for this overestimation of the importance of degree examinations. But Curzon, like Housman and other famous victims of examiner's 'injustice', was given and took other ways of showing his academic prowess.

room. As far as I can judge, Redbrick is ahead of Oxbridge in this way.¹

But 'Bruce Truscot' goes much further than that. He wants the final class to be given on a tri-partite basis. The final examination is to count for one third, to that is to be added 'his ability, plus his industry'. The first criterion is most dangerous, and that it can be seriously advanced shakes one's confidence more than do most of the changes suggested. For it ignores entirely the public character of the examination. It is not for nothing that Oxford calls its tests, 'public examinations'. To give examination credit for 'ability' is to give credit to the appraisal of the teacher. And this is to ignore a very important truth about examinations admirably put by Mr Brereton. 'An examination is a link between two phases in the education of the students taking it . . . In the first place, what have the examination results to tell us about the student's past? They measure the success of the sustained course of training which has culminated in the examination. As the teacher and the students both contribute to this, the examination result for any student measures jointly that student's success *in carrying through a course of activity, and the teacher's success in arranging and supervising the course*. This definition of the meaning of the examination result is very different from many current ideas borrowed from psychological testing. Since the course of training and the examination are inseparably connected, a regularly established examination cannot measure innate characteristics of the students which are independent of the course of preparation.'² It is needless to insist on the vagueness of the term 'ability'. If a student has it, what prevents his showing it in three or four years of organized endeavour, for (as Mr Brereton says) a degree course is a 'course of activity'? There may be cases in which, for some exceptional reason, a student has something that may be called 'ability' and yet has not been able to translate it into academically testable forms. In that case, the remedy is not tinkering with the degree system, but the discreet and restrained use of a testimonial.³ It is, from time to time, necessary to elect scholarship candidates *propter spem* not *propter rem*, but then the college or university takes the rap, pays for its own mistakes. But a university degree is a certificate to the public, and the public (in this showing good sense) expects performance duly tested, not mere 'promise'.

¹ This may not be true. In Oxford, the scientists have an ingenious scheme of linking the examination results with the record of research and manipulative skill in the laboratories.

² J. L. BRERETON, *The Case For Examinations*, p. 63. Italics mine.

³ Even when the testimonial is not given out of kindness, is not so much designed to deceive the employer as to console the applicant, the variability of judgment is notorious. To introduce a testimonial element is to weaken the whole position of the examination system.

The ability assessed by a 'head of a department' is no substitute for performance tested by examination, even by the same head of a department.¹ Again, the 'industry' that is to be tested is successful industry, it is not a moral virtue separate from academic performance. Surely we are not to have a naïve labour theory of value applied to the academic careers of students? Again, the public expects from examination results a record of performance, not of effort spent. Ability and industry are shown in performance.

But, and here 'Bruce Truscot' is on surer, though still treacherous ground, why should credit not be given for work done during the university course? Why should good essays and good term papers not be given weight in awarding the final class? It is not inconceivable that they should be, but the reasons why they are not given credit in a British honours school are suggested by my deliberate use of the word 'credit'. America has more and more turned away from the old system of accumulating 'credits' just because the kind of achievement tested by term papers, by being tested in a narrow field, is held to be inferior to the kind of achievement tested by an examination calling for the co-ordination of several branches of a wide field. It is a more severe test, and the results of the test are better worth having, to be forced for example to deal with the medieval papacy and the constitution of the United States at the same time. That is what, in fact, honours examinations are about; and unconsciously 'Bruce Truscot' is attacking the honours system — which is not sacrosanct and needs examination, criticism and defence.²

¹ Tutors at Oxbridge are sometimes surprised at examination results, both ways, but less often than might be thought from the outside. The examiners are both just and competent as human beings go. But even when a tutor thinks a mistake has been made, he very rarely thinks that his opinion of the intrinsic merits of the candidate ought to outweigh the judgment of the examiners and few tutors known to me think it ought to have any weight. Yet, *pace* 'Bruce Truscot', the Oxbridge tutor has far better chances of assessing 'ability' than has the Redbrick professor. For what is being allowed for is something that, by definition, does not appear in academic tests or work. The Oxbridge tutor can, with no great difficulty, find out a good deal about the intellectual tastes, pretensions, achievements of his pupils in a way not open to a Redbrick professor, who (unlike the tutor) is not a member of the same small, domestic community as the student.

² 'Bruce Truscot' reproaches Oxbridge with an examination system that, reflection would show, was imposed on Oxbridge by its federalism and by its academic structure, at any rate in the arts subjects. At Oxford and Cambridge 'a man may be examined for his degree by two or three dons none of whom knows anything of his record or has ever spoken to him, and where on the other hand, the professor of his Honours School, *the very person who ought to have most to do with the examination* which may so largely determine his career, may not be an examiner at all'. *Red Brick University*, p. 136. This passage admirably illustrates how much 'Bruce Truscot' has forgotten what he knew of Oxford and Cambridge. For there is, in this revealing judgment, the assumption that Oxford and Cambridge are organized in 'Honours Schools' with a head who is *the* professor of

Under 'Bruce Truscot's' views on the examination system, as under his views on research, lies a view of the modern history of British universities that ignores their real character. I have said above that the honours system is not sacrosanct, in which I am in agreement with 'Bruce Truscot'. No country known to me has simply copied our honours system even when, as in the United States, it has been admired and imitated in part.¹ We might remember, too, that Lord Bryce who knew the Oxford system at first hand, who was a Professor at Manchester for a time, who knew the systems both of Germany and the United States, thought the best academic education he had received was the old seven subject arts course at Glasgow. We might also note that the Ministry of Education, the chief buyer of the wares the Arts faculties market, does not, to judge by its salary scales, rate the honours system as high as do the universities! And we must remember that the honours system has arisen out of an historical situation in which 'pure' academic needs were only part of the problem. But that truth can best be left to the discussion of what is the main theme of the Redbrick books, the nefarious effects of the traditional pre-eminence of Oxbridge.

(To be concluded)

the students in the School. This picture has no relation to Oxbridge realities. For example, the Board of Historical Studies at Cambridge, dealing with the largest 'Honours School' on the arts side, has eight professors who are *ex officio* members. The Economics Board has seven. Which of them is to be *ex officio* the examiner? The members of the Board who know the candidates best, in 'Bruce Truscot's' sense, are the college teachers each of whom can only know a few of them. How can any group of examiners be small enough to do its job and yet 'know' three hundred candidates? How are the intangibles to be assessed in such circumstances? They can't be, so the examiners wisely don't try. There are other good reasons why Oxford and Cambridge believe in the neutral examination system (and in the really 'external' examiner), but in fact they have no alternative. And one reason why 'good' degrees from Oxford and Cambridge are highly esteemed is that they are conferred by examiners who have nothing before them but the performance in the examination.

¹ The prestige of the *agrégation* in France is not a true parallel, for the real opposite number to our honours examinations is the *licence*. The nearest equivalents to the *agrégation* are the new Oxford B.Phil and possibly Part III of the Cambridge Mathematical Tripos. Neither is very close.

THE PIOUS EGOISM OF ERNEST RENAN

R. R. BOLGAR

LIKE the Emperor Julian, Ernest Renan was a famous apostate. Conventionally pious folk fifty years ago thought of him as an incarnation of the devil, and the story of his life was used to frighten novices in Catholic monasteries, demonstrating as it did the great power of wickedness over mankind. Professor and Academician, enthroned in the innermost hierarchy of the French educational system and a Corresponding Member of many learned societies, he was the arch-enemy to whom freethinkers all over the world looked for guidance in their attack on the Church. He dealt Christian apologetics some of the most damaging blows which that great instrument of controversy had at any point been called upon to endure. He never spared the rod; and yet in the midst of his worst fulminations, in the thick of theological warfare, he was ready to praise and honour his opponents and victims. He had arrived at the intellectual conviction that Catholic dogma was erroneous. He had dared to rebel. He had suffered the bitterest reproaches and attacks; and yet, while he regularly assailed Christian belief, he remained entirely charmed by Christian piety and the whole Christian way of life. This man who had refused the priesthood, remained for years as much of a priest as he could be. His dark suit suggested some indeterminate clerical garb; a certain hurried unctuousness characterized his manner; and when he talked, it seemed as if a blessing perpetually hovered at the end of those short, rather spatulate fingers.

He tended to parade these traits; and if his attendance at church was covertly done, he did not mind remarking to a Catholic acquaintance who discovered him in St Peter's that the gap between orthodoxy and disbelief was sometimes infinitesimally small. He wrote with great kindness about the Breton priests who had taught him in his boyhood and about the pious Breton peasants among whom he spent the first years of his life. No Catholic writer could have shown more sympathy for their simple faith which shaded off so easily into the crudities of superstition. Was it the case that, like Homer, the ruthless rationalist of the Collège de France sometimes allowed himself to nod?

The apologists of orthodoxy have always found this contrast between the two aspects of Renan profoundly disturbing. An enemy is never welcome when he appears occasionally in the guise of a friend. How could he love a religion that he so bitterly attacked? Or how could he bring himself to attack a religion that in the last

analysis he authentically loved? Lifted above the dust of this controversy by the passage of over fifty years and sheltered in another country, we can see an answer to the riddle. Indeed there seem to be several answers located in several different spheres of discourse.

Let us consider first the philosophical explanation which Renan himself constructed. He was a believer in Evolution. Life was progressing to a definite, if still unknown, goal; and at the present stage, Man was the most significant of all living creatures; for, thanks to his greater awareness, he could actually foresee which way the evolutionary process was tending and could direct his actions accordingly. But as Man in general was superior to the animals around him, so a highly educated man was superior to his ignorant fellows. A wider knowledge enabled him to see further into the future. It was Renan's view that philosophers should be kings. The order of things required that every society should be guided by its intellectuals.

Christianity was to be considered against this general background. The Early Fathers had formed the intellectual vanguard of their age; and when they hammered out the pattern of the Church Militant, their aim had been to bring the actions of their followers into harmony with what they considered the ideal purposes of the Universe. To this end, they had devised, on the one hand, rituals, myths and cultural attitudes calculated to induce certain moods of aspiration towards the Good, and on the other hand, a body of rules to direct these aspirations into particular channels of useful activity. Now, their rituals and other emotive techniques had a lasting appeal. There was no reason why the prayers, the legends and the ideals which had stirred the first Christians should not also stir a nineteenth-century man like Ernest Renan. But the rules which had been drawn up for the early Church did not have the same universal relevance. No one could deny that the human condition changed from age to age as the evolutionary process ran its course. Consequently, the tasks of practical activity were also bound to change, and the moral precepts which had the performance of those tasks for their end could not remain the same. It would be, Renan thought, an act of madness to impose the morality which had suited the conditions of the third century upon the advanced minds of the nineteenth.

Renan expressed these ideas, by implication, in his historical writings. The vital characteristic of religion is there represented as the ability to discover in nature something beyond phenomena. To be religious is to have a sense of the infinite; it is to revel in the poetry of the soul. Christ's mission had been to bring a new spirit among men, and the only possible description of that spirit is to call it a perfect idealism, a fervent aspiration towards Life's eternal goal.

When Renan writes in this manner, he seems at first sight to be merely elaborating the theological consequences of his evolutionary hypothesis. But the more one reads his voluminous works, the more one comes to notice that this belief in evolution is not after all the real key to his thought. The emphasis lies elsewhere. The idea that the intellectual has always been the best judge of what constitutes a good life is just a remote deduction from his main premises; but it is there that his arguments persistently return until one is driven to recognize it as the principal point at issue. The generalizations about evolution are no more than a convenient framework for a piece of special pleading. They are included to provide intellectual support for his self-affirmation.

This becomes obvious in the *Vie de Jésus*. It is true, of course, that the immediate success of that book was largely due to Renan's ingenious arrangement of the material so as to give — in the journalistic sense of the phrase — a human interest to the Gospel story. But its pervasive influence, its wide and lasting appeal, must be attributed to its teachings, to its presentation with such superabundant skill of the doctrine which must have delighted an individualistic age — that even religion begins and ends at home.

Renan's avowed aim was to infuse his philosophy into his readers' minds imperceptibly, without allowing them to become precisely aware of what they had come to accept, and consequently he confused rather than clarified his basic meaning. But for those who are prepared to look, and then to look again, at his writings, there will emerge from behind the delusive shimmer of his style, slowly but with an ever-increasing distinctness, the main lineaments of an aristocratic anarchism as thorough-paced as any that Nietzsche produced. All those elements in religious belief that derive by analogy from the parent-child relationship are systematically denigrated. Nothing is permitted to stand that might argue the existence of a Supreme Being before whose law men must make surrender of their individual wills. Those teachings in the early Christian tradition that postulate such a ruler are dismissed as Jewish survivals unconnected with the real inspiration of Jesus. If only the latter had been able to use the terminology of an up-to-date Hegelianism, He would, Renan suggests, have surely talked of His participation in Reality. It was a pity that the limitations of primitive language had trapped Him into the anthropomorphic claim that He was the Son of God.

And perhaps Renan's notorious, militant disbelief in the miraculous was only another example of his individualism. A miracle which interfered with the natural uniformities demanded for its performance an Agent external and superior to the whole process of evolution. To admit the existence of such an Agent in the days of

Christ, a mere two thousand years ago, was tantamount to permitting its possibility in the nineteenth century and to conceding that it might have claims over the human will. Such claims could then be logically extended to cover the will and intentions of that intellectual *élite* whose manifest privilege it was to guide the rest of mankind. Renan recoiled in horror from that conclusion. It was a possibility he dared not contemplate.

So, in the end, we are driven to consider the character of the man. It is true that his philosophical arguments can be remarkably persuasive. Their cogency might admittedly be difficult to impugn. But need we trouble to do so? They are palpable rationalizations, the intellectually fascinating epiphenomena of temperamental traits. Problems concerning the function of religion are in the last analysis problems of biography; and if we are to have light on them, we must turn to the circumstances which moulded Renan the man.

He was born when his parents were verging on middle age. The youngest of three children, a gap of over ten years divided him from Alain and Henriette, his elder brother and sister. Their father was one of the luckless. Inheriting a prosperous grocery business, he had brought it within a few years to the brink of ruin; and when to redeem his fortunes, he undertook hazardous voyages as the captain of a cargo boat, they procured him next to no profit. Before Ernest's birth, the family had spent nearly a decade in that mood of settled depression which the breadwinner's failure invariably creates; and when the young child appeared, its gaiety provided a welcome contrast to their grim preoccupations. He was, in particular, the pride and joy of his sister, Henriette. Their home was not one in which a young girl could think freely of her own happiness; and in any case her natural attractions were considerably diminished by an unfortunate birthmark which made social intercourse distasteful to her. Her baby brother became the centre of her life. Nothing, she felt, was too good for him; and she let him bully her unmercifully.

At the end of June 1828, when Ernest was five, there occurred the disaster which accentuated his family's wretchedness, but as far as he was concerned, merely reinforced his earlier privileged position. Captain Renan vanished one night from his boat in St. Mâlo harbour and was never seen again. His creditors pressed for payment; bankruptcy threatened; and that hell of starvation, overcrowding and overwork, which made up the existence of the nineteenth-century poor, gaped briefly before the Renans' eyes. And then, after the first fluster of panic, quietly shut again. Tréguier where they lived had been a cathedral city before the Revolution, and in the eighteen-twenties its priests were still supreme. Local affairs were controlled by the Church. Under its kindly dominion, ruin was allowed to afflict only the impious. The Renans were known as a

devout family. They were accordingly preserved from the extremes of disaster.

But although ecclesiastical influence persuaded their creditors to hold back awhile, the family's circumstances were still very hard. Alain took a job in a bank away from home. Henriette tried to start a school. The present held nothing for them except privation; and all they had to cheer them was the thought of possible better times in the future. Ernest, who was now so dependent, would one day grow into a brilliant and resourceful man. He was to be their saviour who would guide them into their kingdom. Perhaps no small boy has ever escaped spiritually unscathed from the fire of an elder sister's devotion; and certainly Ernest had less chance than most. The attention he had received, the daydreams which had been woven round his person, had left their inevitable marks upon his character. He was deeply self-centred. But the piety and seriousness of the Renans had given their spoiling a peculiar twist. They disapproved of Ernest being naughty almost as much as they were prepared to indulge him when he was well-behaved, and the child soon learnt that the affection, the subservience to his wishes, the homage which he so enjoyed were to be earned by certain, for him, rather mysterious forms of behaviour. His self-centredness ran in double harness with a desire to be approved; and he used to follow his mother round asking anxiously: 'Mamma, am I being good!' For when he was good, he was the monarch of all he surveyed.

Given this background, success at the Ecclesiastical school which he eventually entered was bound to set a profound stamp upon his personality. He noticed that by working at his tasks he could win from his teachers the same sort of appreciation that had delighted him at home. The acquisition of knowledge was therefore a way of being good, and an easier one than any he had previously discovered. He began to work; and after a time, when his industry and his good memory earned him a succession of triumphs, there grew up in his mind the conviction that everyone would automatically bend the knee to knowledge; so he pursued learning with all the force of his egoism. Had he stayed with the simple priests of Tréguier, he might have grown up content to be the local wonder boy. We have seen that he found the role psychologically satisfactory. But when he reached adolescence, his reputation for brilliance launched him into a wider field and proved the undoing of his happiness.

In Paris, the groups which had suffered from the Revolution were cementing their alliance. This was the time when the French aristocrats discovered that the successors of St Peter and his Galilean fishermen were their heaven-sent allies, while the French Catholic Church came to the conclusion that the rich and distinguished were

born more pious than the poor. The politicians of both parties, linked in the arcana of the Congregation, were busy hammering out the ways and means by which their agreement could be manifested. During the autumn of 1837, when Renan aged fourteen was just beginning what was to be his last year at Tréguier, the Abbé Dupanloup (who had made such a success with his catechism classes in the Madeleine) was appointed Principal of the little seminary of St Nicolas du Chardonnet. This was a somewhat undistinguished secondary school which had never yet aimed to do more than to provide intending priests with a lycée education in a safe Catholic atmosphere. But Dupanloup saw it as a weapon. He decided to make St Nicolas a model for France to follow. It was not to take as many candidates for the priesthood as before, but those it admitted were to be hand-picked for intellectual ability, and he planned to put alongside them the scions of the Parisian aristocracy. The guiding principle of his educational scheme was that the clergy and the distinguished laity should mix freely and educate each other under the influence of a curriculum in which religion, intellect and fashion were equally stressed. Four years of this training would suffice to turn the penniless priests-to-be into men of the world while the wealthy youths who were their companions would become faithful sons of the Church. And they would all be able to hold their own intellectually against the Freemasons and the Liberals. In St Nicolas du Chardonnet the alliance of the Salon and the Confessional found its perfect pedagogic expression.

Dupanloup had his agents in the provinces looking for boys of suitable ability; and when a friend of Henriette called his attention to the brilliance of her young brother, the subtle Abbé was immediately ready to offer the boy a scholarship. Thus Ernest came to Paris; and there his development entered upon a fresh stage.

At first he had hopes of repeating in St Nicolas the successes that had crowned his Tréguier career. But he was not well-fitted to achieve that blend of piety and elegance which Dupanloup's policy required. The work of the school laid great stress on essay-writing and speech-making, both of which were judged purely on style; and in these activities the social maturity of the well-to-do boys gave them an undoubted advantage. Besides, the masters would have been less than human, if they had not tended to single out for praise such of their pupils as had powerful connections. Most of Dupanloup's coadjutors were ambitious men in whose eyes every aristocrat was a potential penitent and patron while the clever provincials were only potential rivals.

As one year followed another without lifting him out of an apparent mediocrity, Ernest lost hope. The strain on him was severe, if unrealized. While the scramble of his schoolboy routine held his

conscious attention, the inner forces of his mind had to cope with what proved to be a major crisis. He had a certain toughness of spirit, and for a time at least he could have cheerfully done without the intoxication of success; but what he needed, what he could not do without, was the assurance that he had deserved to succeed. He had come to accept brilliance in his studies as his particular way of being good. And it was his most determined conviction, carried over from his childhood, that on his being good depended all his happiness and all his security. In these circumstances, he had no choice. He had to jettison reality and take refuge in the ideal. He persuaded himself — not entirely without justice — that he would have done better, if his masters had not been blind to true merit, if they had valued the right subjects, if they had not been misled by flattery. To guard himself from anxiety, he learnt to criticize his superiors.

This was the first stage in the development of Renan's rebelliousness. The second stage was reached when he left St Nicolas for a two-year course in the seminary at Issy. Here the prescribed subjects were congenial. He was expected to learn philosophy and natural science, to break his head over arguments instead of perorations; and for a brief moment he seems to have believed that his long-awaited chance had come, that in this new setting his talents would at last be recognized. His disappointment was, consequently, all the keener when he found that some of the most influential masters openly set themselves to discredit the subjects they were supposed to teach. The metaphysics course was entrusted to M Gottofrey who informed his pupils that philosophy had no real value and exhorted everyone to seek the benefits which could be derived from a naïve mystical faith. Renan found himself unappreciated and was inspired to take up the cudgels of opposition. With the ruthless enthusiasm of his nineteen years, and banking on the fact that apparently the Church shared his views — had not her authorities instituted the philosophy course? — he made himself the noisy champion of understanding against faith. His tactics rendered him unpopular. The devil's advocate is a dialectical convenience; but he must not believe in his devil. Renan palpably did. He persisted in his advocacy for over a year before he realized that after all the Church was against him, and that M Gottofrey was carrying out the wishes of his superiors in good measure when he condemned all attempts to find truth by reason and lauded simple faith instead. But by the time this realization came, Renan had gone too far to withdraw. The emotional fire of his dialectic had transmuted his passion for knowledge into a passion for reason.

To this period belong the beginnings of the famous correspondence with Henriette. Her little school in Tréguier had been forced, by its Church-run competitors, to close down soon after it had opened,

and following on this first failure a succession of ill-paid teaching jobs in Paris had exhausted her strength and humiliated her rather arrogant spirit. Then in 1841 came what seemed, financially at least, a golden opportunity. She was offered a well-paid post as governess in the household of a Polish count. Its acceptance meant exile; but the hope that within a few years she would amass enough money to pay off the family's debts, made her accept. So, during the whole decisive period of Ernest's twenties, her influence upon him was exercised, not in person, but in a long and remarkable correspondence. Her ardently affectionate, irrefutably logical pages struck home like a bombardment upon his peace of mind. Her experience at Tréguier had made her suspicious of priests and their influence. She had disciplined her resentment so long as it had seemed expedient. She had used her Catholic connections to get Ernest a scholarship from Dupanloup. But now she was determined to leave no stone unturned to make him reflect before he bound himself to a clerical career. From her Polish isolation she led him to scrutinize his motives and to put his fears into words. She made him doubt; for one's motives rarely seem adequate under such stringent analysis, and one's fears grow through being expressed.

In the Breton community of Renan's boyhood, the priests had been treated like the magician-kings of a primitive tribe. They were respected for the power they in fact exercised, and even more for the power they were reputed to draw from a supernatural source. Some of this naïve wonder at the special merits of the priesthood remained with Renan even after he left Brittany; it was his strongest subconscious motive for desiring a clerical career. But it was not a motive which would stand examination in the cold light of a secular day. On the other hand, he was considerably attracted by the idea of a peaceful life devoted to his books; and it seemed to him that if he were lucky, he stood a very good chance of finding just that sort of life in the Church. Monseigneur Affre was the Archbishop of Paris; and in Monseigneur Affre's house there were many mansions. But suppose — and the thought made Renan pause whenever it occurred to him — only suppose that he was not among the lucky ones. He confessed to Henriette that the thought of parochial work was most abhorrent to him. It represented all that he most disliked.

In spite of these fears, he was still unwilling at this juncture so much as to consider the drastic step of a complete break with the Church. The problems facing him had to undergo yet another transformation. Philology had to replace philosophy, and ambition had to replace fear, as the guiding forces of his thought and will, before he could make up his mind about the future.

At the time he entered Issy's senior seminary of St Sulpice in the autumn of 1844, a new stage was fast approaching in the theological

crisis of the nineteenth century. If the intellectualism of Malebranche was still taught in the seminaries, many a long day had elapsed since anyone had thought it sufficiently convincing to be of value in controversy. Nor had the new forms of defence which succeeded the metaphysical (the anti-intellectual traditionalism of Lamennais and the psychological evaluations of Schleiermacher) proved any more competent to stem the victories of free thought. These failures had produced a widespread feeling that the speculative sciences were no longer of much use to the Church; and as a result an argument which had been somewhat neglected, the argument from the facts of history, had leapt into prominence. Among the men who taught Renan — that is, in the eyes of the generation immediately preceding his own — the veracity of the Gospel story was regarded as providing the most immediately cogent proof of Christian belief, Protestant and Catholic alike.

Now, the impending stage in the apologetical crisis was nothing less than a full scale attack upon this last stronghold of certainty. The Hebraists of Germany were not good Catholics. Most of them were Protestants (a few, even freethinkers or Jews), and they had been collecting a mass of information which bore upon the trustworthiness of the Scriptures. Their conclusions were not favourable to the theory of verbal inspiration or even to the common credibility of the Gospels as an historical source. They denied the authenticity of certain prophetic books. They stigmatized interpolations. They shed a cruel light on inconsistencies. They refused to accept the evangelists as contemporary witnesses; and what was perhaps worse, adduced good grounds for suspecting them of bias. These ideas and others like them, constituting that immense body of knowledge which we now class under the rubric of Higher Criticism, were just becoming known in France about the time that Renan went to St Sulpice. The stage was set; and suddenly he found himself placed in the middle of it.

The curriculum at St Sulpice included the elementary study of Hebrew alongside the more usual topics of dogmatic theology. The lecturer was a certain M Le Hir, an innocent specialist, who had a real love for his subject. Controversy had not yet made him aware of the doctrinal pitfalls which might eventually lurk beneath the once halcyon paths of philological interpretation, and he was only too happy to rouse his pupils to an enthusiasm for the facts and techniques he taught them. For the first time since leaving Tréguier, Renan found someone who would praise his attempts to master a serious branch of knowledge without any reservations at all; and the effects of this encouragement were instantaneous and startling. Under the guidance of M Le Hir — to which he was soon permitted to add the lessons of M Quatremère, the Professor at the Collège

de France — he made prodigious strides, and within less than a year he was reputed a prospective expert in Hebrew. He was even asked to take an elementary class which M Le Hir had grown too busy to manage.

It was the situation which had existed at Tréguier all over again. He was valued, almost wooed, by his superiors. Dazzling possibilities for the future were dangled in front of his eyes. Nobody talked of a parish now. Instead there came a suggestion from the Archbishop of Paris himself that the young Hebraist might like to join the staff of a projected Catholic university. The quiet life, the congenial work, by which he set so much store, were being offered to him ready for the taking.

This was the point when he chose to break away. He had clung while he was unpopular. When fortune smiled on him, he left. Or so it must have seemed to a superficial observer. Two motives impelled him. On the one hand, he was finding it harder than ever to suppress his views at the dictates of authority. At Issy he had made a virtue of following reason in defiance of his superiors, whom he had represented to himself as being in the wrong. And now his self-esteem was irrevocably committed to this course. He could no more give up an opinion lightly than he could lightly wound himself. On the other hand the prospect outside the Church seemed now less dreary. It was true that his clerical education, which had kept him outside the state system, was bound to prove a hindrance to his advancement. He would not be able to compete immediately for the appointments to which his abilities entitled him. He would need to take first the whole gamut of the university examinations. But once that preliminary hurdle was surmounted, he would be safe. The reigning pundits of the University shared his views. A Cousin, a Burnouf, a Garnier was certain to welcome him as a supporter.

Thus it was that at the height of his success, at the very moment when he received the Archbishop's invitation to join that Catholic University he had once dreamed about, he made his final decision to withdraw, to cross the square in front of the seminary to a quiet lodging-house kept for the use of priests and there to don a plain dark suit, a layman in mid-passage. He parted from his Directors in so friendly a manner (excusing himself for not believing enough), that they took the whole matter for a temporary crisis of conscience. But then as the years passed while he struggled through his examinations keeping himself on an usher's pittance and on money contributed by his sister, he allowed himself to grow more and more open in his disbelief. A close friendship with the young Marcellin Berthelot familiarized him with the teachings of Positivism, so that he now added to the fruits of his Hebrew studies some of the more commonplace techniques for discrediting such unscientific pheno-

mena as a belief in miracles. In proportion as he grew more distinguished, so his attacks on the doctrines of the Church increased in violence until he began his History of Christianity by writing the *Vie de Jésus*. At that juncture, the gradual process of estrangement may be regarded as having reached its end. It could go no further. He had become the great apostate. But then and always he retained the keenest possible interest for every aspect of religious experience. The study of religion was his life's work; nor did he ever lose his first tenderness and solicitude for believers and their ways. The sight of a peasant at prayer, the thought of the humble labours of a priest, the singing of a mass, never failed to tap the well-springs of sentiment in his heart, and the words never failed to come pouring forth in their sonorous thousands to describe these pieties which he considered so dear and precious.

In self-defence, we have seen, Renan appealed, in the first place, to philosophical ideas. But, at the same time, he was fond of representing himself as a man who respected scientific accuracy so much that he had sacrificed to it even the religious sentiments which lay closest to his heart. And again, his story was that he set so great a value upon the liberal ideal of independence that he could not tolerate remaining a member of an authoritarian church. What weight must we place upon these suggestions? Not, perhaps, very much. In respect of the former, it is easy enough to prove that Renan's boasted passion for the truth was strangely circumscribed. His historical work is of limited value, in spite of his vast scholarship, because of his scant and erratic respect for fact. He is known to have taken the view that the historian's duty was to go systematically beyond the data at his disposal in order to construct an imaginative picture on the basis of what he felt to be the truth. That veneration for brute fact which by his own account had demanded the sacrifice of his faith was in its turn sacrificed — without lament — to the claims of artistry and the vagaries of imagination.

Nor was his Liberalism a plant of much stronger growth. He never liked democracy. The populace always impressed him as noisy and disrespectful. He did not feel that he could trust them; and in that curious production of his middle age, *La Réforme Intellectuelle et Morale*, written when he was alarmed by the Commune, he advocated giving the minds of the common people into the keeping of the Church. He thought that such an arrangement would make for peace and quiet provided that the intellectual liberties of his own class were left undisturbed. By the same token, he was prepared to surrender all political independence to a legitimist monarchy. The inference is plain. What he valued was not factual accuracy in the abstract. It was not freedom in the abstract. What he valued were his ideas and his own freedom from restraint. His

championship of Science and his Liberalism were merely channels through which self-worship found expression.

The stubborn fact of his self-centredness can hardly be called into question. To have been the last child of already ageing parents, to have been by so many years the youngest member of his family, to have received the fervid attention of a devoted sister and mother, to have stood as the solitary symbol of their hopes and to have (in addition) possessed such intelligence that he could win a similarly privileged position first at school and then in adult life — all these were unusual circumstances which could not fail to make him intensely, even anxiously, aware of his own value. His career was full of subterfuges and betrayals. He failed to be an honest priest. He failed to be an honest liberal reformer. He failed in some respects even to be an honest scholar. Concerned for himself alone he could not put his heart into any wider cause. The need to preserve his own well-being presented itself with such compulsive force that other persons and other claims appeared insubstantial by comparison. He was prepared to hurt his mother when he left the Church. He was prepared to hurt Henriette when he decided to marry. They had been the most important people in his life. They had made great sacrifices on his behalf. But even so their interests had no chance against his own. Not to consider his own happiness appeared to him a crime against nature.

What sort of religious life could such a man have led? None perhaps but the one he chose. The Christian ideal at its best partakes so heavily of charitableness and mercy that it seems outside the grasp of those whose emotions are stirred only by their own requirements. Renan, the egoist, could never have been a Christian in the proper sense of the word. Since he loved power and possessed a vivid sense of the past, he found himself emotionally stirred whenever he contemplated the long-standing might of the Church, and the Christian Faith was associated in his mind with this emotion. It was also associated with his childhood. His earliest years had been his golden age. Never again had he felt himself so completely the master of his world, and all the appurtenances of his early triumphs appeared to him precious in consequence. We have seen how, after the death of Captain Renan, the task of protecting his dependants had fallen upon the local priesthood, and how as a result this body had come to represent in Ernest's mind an extension of his immediate family. Need we be surprised therefore that when he grew to manhood, he treated the Church as the majority of adolescents treat their parents? Many young men and women can continue to love the mother and father whose authority they reject, and in just that way he continued to feel affection for the religious world from which he had apostatized. And he had, besides, for religion that detached regard which

scholars bestow upon the objects of their research. Out of these diverse strands of feeling he wove the complex sentiment which was his particular brand of Christianity. Based on taste and habit to the exclusion of belief, and limited at every turn by the demands of his egoistical temperament, it coloured rather than shaped his life. He was prepared to offer the Christian Faith all devotion short of self-denial.

A sincere Christian may be tempted to condemn this attitude as a mockery of religion; and so in a way it was. Nevertheless it rendered an important service to the nineteenth-century world. For Renan's egoism was not unique. The pattern which his personality followed was common to many in that heyday of private enterprise when enriching oneself was regarded with some justice as the soundest way of serving the community. Circumstances trained men, and especially middle class men, to be egoists. Over the question of accepting Christian teachings, they all had to some degree the same difficulties as Renan. Their only approach to religion was through its accidental qualities. Theirs had to be a superficial Christianity or none at all.

For many men in that new world of the industrial revolution Christianity was an impossible ideal. They had to choose in practice between pious egoism and plain irreligion. No other attitude was easily open to them. And when we recognize this, Renan's work acquires a new significance. By encouraging his contemporaries to admire the elaborate arches and illumined windows of their cathedrals, by persuading them to delight in the magnificence of their hymns, by inducing them to cultivate a taste for ritual if only as an archaic performance, and even by leading them to savour the subtle restraints of clerical conversation, he obscured the sharpness of the essential conflict between the Christian spirit and the values of an acquisitive society. All those who consider that conflict undesirable ought, perhaps, to regard him as a benefactor.

Nor was Renan alone in his instinctive desire to reconcile the social and religious traditions in which he had been brought up. There were few people in his day willing to admit that the gulf between acquisitiveness and Christianity was too wide to be bridged. Men did not dare to contemplate the consequences of such an admission either for society or for their personal lives. Even the official leaders of Christian thought preferred the cautious paths of mediation. For who could foretell the issue of an open conflict between religious authority and the spirit of the age? The Roman Church condemned Renan, but in the precepts of the *Quadragesimo Anno* it put forward an economic and social programme which was based in fact on a compromise between the acquisitive and the Christian way of life, and which many non-Catholics like Ruskin

also welcomed. But if it is reasonable to assume, as Leo XIII did, that a Christian business man will voluntarily limit his profits and agree to wages decided by the natural aspirations of his employees, then it is perhaps equally reasonable to claim (as Renan might have claimed) that an egoist who is guided exclusively by the promptings of his own heart can yet be a Christian if in the course of his upbringing those promptings have accidentally acquired a vaguely Christian pattern.

Compromises such as these seemed necessary in the nineteenth century. But compromises they remain, and for that reason they always have and always will produce further conflicts. Thus, since the demarcation line between just and unjust profits has never been clearly determined, the workings of Christian Democracy have been frequently and not without due cause condemned by those who have had the interests of the downtrodden intransigently at heart; and similarly there have always been and there always will be, honest men to whom this compromise outlook of pious egoism, which Renan advocated, appears indefensible in the light of their wider experience and their more abounding charity.

Moreover, once we admit the claim of the compromiser, the pious egoist, to be regarded as a Christian, the further question of whether he stays in or out of a particular Church becomes a mere matter of chance. The choice between apostasy and faith will be settled, to some extent by the comparative weight of that accidental Christian element in his make-up which is due to training, but more particularly by the fortuitous concordance or opposition between his private purposes and the aims which the orthodox momentarily favour. Renan had to leave the Catholic Church; but his disciple Barrès, who had much the same approach to life, could become its leading French apologist.

THE BOLSHEVIK IDEOLOGY

THE INTELLECTUAL AND EMOTIONAL FACTORS IN COMMUNIST AFFILIATION

DONALD G. MACRAE

IN what follows I attempt to treat Marxism in its Bolshevik form not as a system or method, but as an ideology, not as a corpus of knowledge, but as a constellation of concepts in the minds of men. In doing this I hope to fill the gap that has been left by such recent and excellent studies as those of Carew Hunt, Plamenatz and Arnold,¹ and to answer some of the questions not dealt with by, for example, Towster or Inkeles.² My problem is that of the appeal of Bolshevism as a politico-social creed; and the question I want to consider is, why men moved by honest and generous sentiments associate themselves with the thought-world and institutions of international communism.³ In short, my proposal is to treat Bolshevism sociologically, as an ideological fact, and not merely as a possibly 'true' account of the worlds of nature and of man. There are plenty of studies of the validity of various portions of Marxism, but there is no great value in them for us. The objective 'truth' of Islam or Calvinism is not of much help in deciding why men are Mahometans or Presbyterians, and only at the end of this paper is the veristic element in Bolshevik theory considered, and then merely in its relevance to the social operation of the ideology. Just as the historian of Islam would discount, not as intrinsically unimportant but as beside the point, the divine inspiration claimed for the new creed which, in many ways a Christian heresy, and developed on the

¹ R. N. CAREW HUNT, *The Theory and Practice of Communism*, London, 1950.
J. PLAMENATZ, 'Deviations from Marxism', *Political Quarterly*, Vol. XXI, 1950;
'The Communist Ideology', *Political Quarterly*, Vol. XXI, 1951.

G. L. ARNOLD, 'Stalinism', *Political Quarterly*, Vol. XXII, 1950.

² J. TOWSTER, *Political Power in the U.S.S.R.*, New York, 1948.

A. INKELES, *Public Opinion in Soviet Russia: A Study in Mass Persuasion*, Cambridge (U.S.A.), 1950.

³ A rather different question which is closely related to the one I discuss, and which partly overlaps with it, concerns why people actually join communist parties and why the membership of such parties fluctuates so widely in non-communist countries. I do not think a general answer is possible here. All sorts of questions of fear, possible advantage, indignation or despair are at work, and these are matters that should be studied in terms of the specific histories of the various communist parties. Such histories hardly exist in a serious form, though something has been done for Germany and more for France — e.g. in the work of Zévaès, Rossi, Monnerot and Walter.

oppressed and semi-barbarous marches of Mediterranean civilization, was to conquer in just over a century one-sixth of the land surface of the globe, so the sociologist must treat Bolshevism today. Certainly Bolshevism claims the status and the prestige of science and calls on its predictive success as witness of its veridicity, but many writers have observed how a prophecy may ensure its own fulfilment,¹ and it is my purpose here to consider the character of the appeal of Bolshevism altogether apart from its status as sociology, economics or philosophy.

The claim to scientific status has been mentioned, so we may begin with its ideological significance. Science and the mental habits of the scientist have acquired the most enormous of prestiges by their empirical success in explaining, controlling and adapting the world of nature. The ascription of being scientific is the ascription simultaneously of truth and of power. This has been realized in many fields from Christian Science to the 'race science' of the Nazis or the advertisement of patent medicines. As a result, the claim of Bolshevism to be a science and/or to be the truly scientific method, has great emotive force. That Marxism professes a materialist philosophy reinforces this position for the most spectacular of the sciences, and (before 1896) the most theoretically complete and self-sufficient, was undoubtedly physics, with which philosophical materialism at most times has been profoundly associated.

But Marxism is a science of a special sort: its foundations are not empirical or inductive,² but Hegelian; and the development of Marx's own thought, would provide a sceptical but sympathetic biographer with a valuable subject. Marxists claim the natural sciences as their allies, accepting 'mechanical' explanations save at crucial points. Here, where the laboratory scientist finds explanation incomplete or difficult and problems unsolved, the 'dialectic' is appealed to and used to dissolve all mysteries.

The dialectic is well-fitted to this function as most occasions can be forced into the triadic frame of thesis — antithesis — synthesis, and as its categories of transition, opposition, contradiction and interpenetration are ill-defined and wide enough to make merely verbal explanation easily accessible to anyone who has acquired the appropriate vocabulary. The dialectic, therefore, not merely associates Marxism and science, it makes Marxism appear as a kind of super-science.

The scientific prestige extends further. Marxism claims to be a science of society and, consequently, of man. This sociology no

¹ E.g. EDWARD GIBBON, *Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, ch. I, where Gibbon discusses the legend of Terminus.

² Cf. KARL MARX'S doctoral dissertation, *Differenz der Democritischen und Epicurischen Naturphilosophie*, Jena, 1841.

doubt has virtues, which have often been pointed out, but here I am concerned only with its ideological significance. It is important to realize that *to most Marxists no knowledge of alternative, objective thought about society is available*. This is true of manual workers in the West who can well appreciate the world of physical science in their daily life and work, but it has an additional importance in technologically backward areas. Here the slow spread of industry, the social dislocation which this spread nevertheless entails, and the desire for technological and scientific power, all enormously enhance the appeal of Bolshevism to local skilled workers and discontented intellectuals. Where technological inferiority and hope deferred in industrial progress cause despair, there the social technique and promise of Bolshevism provide a social substitute involving only human organization, and Marx is seen as the provider of an accessible short cut by his science of society and the social revolution to a world of technological and industrial achievement.

To correct one technology by another — a social one — is part of the appeal of Marxism to the proletariat: in colonial countries this promise is reinforced by the claim that an industrial order is possible (without the pains of birth and growth) by the use of a social technique backed by the repute of science in areas where science is still half magic.¹

In all this of course is a truth: science by giving understanding and knowledge *does* increase human power, and this is already to some degree true of academic social science. The veridical elements in Marxist social theory buttress the whole ideological structure, and the triumph of Bolshevism is guaranteed to the believer by the same forces which keep the stars

... rank on rank

The army of unalterable law.

What this name of science guarantees is very simple and very old, and many Marxists have denounced those who remark and comment on the identity which can be observed between their creed and a Messianic and Apocalyptic religion. Bukharin, for instance, wrote: 'one of the most widespread forms of ideological class struggle against Marxism is its treatment as an eschatological doctrine, with all its accompaniments of chiliasm, of soteriology, of myth ... All these analogies are playing with words'.²

Now, in so far as these analogies are intended as criticisms of the objective validity of Marxist reasoning, Bukharin's criticism is to

¹ The word 'magic' is used strictly — i.e. in the sense of Frazer's *Golden Bough* where magic is a false technology, an erroneous attempt to command the forces of nature and society.

² N. I. BUKHARIN (and others), *Marxism and Modern Thought*, p. 3.

the point, but any account of Marxism as a social doctrine, animating a social movement, and which is concerned with Marxism as a myth in Sorel's sense — the affirmation of a readiness to *act* — must see in these analogies a profound relevance. The Bolshevik testament is a Christian heresy whose God is personified history, pronouncing judgment on the unjust in the thunder of revolution and the smoke of battle, and delivering them not in some far future but here, now. History, as in St Augustine or Calvin, is the story of divine judgment moving under the hands of men to its one conclusion. And what is more, Marxists have recognized this: the language of the Bible breaks through the *Communist Manifesto* where the 'expropriators are expropriated', or in the sudden anger of the Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*, and Engels in his *Peasant War in Germany* recognizes his kin with Munzer as English Marxists have more recently recognized (or thought they recognized) theirs with Winstanley and the Diggers of the English revolution. The emotive appeal is that of a religion of salvation and damnation supported by a crabbed, a Talmudic, theology. And this can be said without prejudice, to the value of Marx's contributions to history, the social sciences, and to politics. What has led Bolshevism in our time to dominate some eight hundred million human beings is the subtle alliance of what can be recognized as a modicum of scientific truth with a salvationist religion.

If we examine the parallel in more detail we will find it close and illuminating. Marxism is a religion of the dispossessed and discontented, and it promises them relief *because* of their condition. The very forces of the capitalist historical process that result in poverty and in misery at the same time prepare the judgment of the revolution, and this judgment is a true correction of time in which the mighty are cast down, and the lowly exalted. The consummation of time is guaranteed by history, but history is not justified by faith alone, but by works. Emotively at least Bolshevism is deterministic: like all deterministic creeds its rigour arouses in the believers the most resolute and patient action and thus their acts confirm the faith, and the faith the acts.

The goal of time is the reign of the saints, the dictatorship of the proletariat, a time of justice without mercy. Beyond the state, 'withered away', lies the realm of mercy, of 'truly human history', of love and comradeship, in fact, of anarchy as understood by Godwin, Bakunin and Kropotkin.¹ The goal of anarchy, of the innocence of human relations unconstrained by law, is the goal of the return to Eden and to the restoration of the Natural Man of the *Philosophes*. It is an aboriginal dream of humanity.

But not merely does Bolshevism promise the wrath to come and

¹ Cf. in particular K. MARX, *Les pretendues scissions de l'Internationale*, 1872

paradise beyond, it gives the most powerful of motives, fear and hope, to those who would join. The victory of the revolution is inevitable: therefore let those who can purge their class-guilt, join with the proletariat and escape the judgment. Moreover, as Lenin argued,¹ since the revolution needs, if not bourgeois leaders, at least leaders drawn from the bourgeoisie, they may hope for power in doing so. Bolshevism provides the exhilarating knowledge of understanding, of being 'in on' the secrets of social destiny. It also provides a threat.

The minatory aspect of the prophecy is clear: the dross-heap of history waits for those who hesitate or choose wrongly. And all choice, but that of communism, is wrong: the historical process, the dialectic, the prestige of science warrant the victory of the Marxist proletariat. The actual character of the reign of the saints, of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, where the Communist Party has come to power, has profoundly and of set purpose² confirmed the threat. It may not for long in a Communist country be of advantage to have been on the winning side, but it is certain perdition to have sided with the losers. The very knowledge of probable danger within the fold coupled with the conviction of certain danger without, produces a vertiginous delight in the more sophisticated Marxist.

But the primary attraction of Marxism cannot be to the sophisticated, though there can be no doubt that Marxism exercises a peculiar fascination over those who are susceptible to the worst intellectual heresy of our age: the romanticism of violence. (This is especially true because the individual who might well be afraid of his own inclinations in this direction can excuse himself to himself by the generosity of his goal and the 'scientifically' established fact that history and society are intrinsically brutal and predetermined.) The main appeal is not here, however; it is the simple one of the Messiah and the Apocalypse.

In the writings of Marx and Engels the eschatological centre is hidden and qualified by an enormous commentary on politics which are now out-of-date, economics that is now irrelevant, philosophy that was always largely verbal trickery, science now outmoded, and a historical sociology of economic and other institutions still of high value. Lenin and the early Bolsheviks drew a distinction, which has since been maintained between Propaganda, between the dissemination of total understanding of a situation among the few, and the Agitation of a limited number of principles of action among the many. In these terms the history of Bolshevik thought and the

¹ LENIN, *Collected Works* (2nd ed.), Vol. IV, pp. 383-91.

² Cf. L. TROTSKY, *The Defence of Terrorism* (this book, originally published in 1921, re-appeared with a new introduction — London, 1935 — after Trotsky had become a victim of the methods he justified. He retracts nothing.)

history of Bolshevik expression (which has largely conditioned that thought) has been that of the replacement of Propaganda by Agitation. This is not merely visible in the transition from the language of the young Marx — antithetical, epigrammatic, brilliant and brutal — to the leaden repetitions of Marshal Stalin or Mr Molotov. It can be seen in the transition to Agitation within the U.S.S.R. since 1917, and in the growth of that extraordinary and now international jargon based on the recapitulation and recombination of some sixty or seventy phrases with which we are all familiar,¹ and which has so thoroughly debased a number of the most common and necessary words of political discourse.

This simplification into dogma of the apocalypse has an enormous appeal, especially in backward territories. There the mere fact that it is a simplification, a pre-digestion of a 'science' which gives hope, is immensely attractive.² Marxism does not merely give access in tabloid form to western culture, it gives, at the same time, a feeling of superiority to it. The psychological oppression of the West is reversed by Bolshevism, and a felt inferiority can triumph in observing the inevitable judgment whereby the last shall be first, the first last. The Bolshevik makes great use of local history and local pride in his propaganda. He reveals the 'inwardness' of what 'really' happened, and turns to the surface a new pride in a new knowledge of the achievements of the oppressed. He gives in fact, the 'ancient lowly' a history and therefore a pedigree and a dignity. Objectively much of this is admirable and useful, but it reinforces the millenarian faith which is central to the mass propaganda and success of Communism.

Bolsheviks have always been ready, in Lenin's phrase, to denounce 'Marxist bookworms and braggarts', and this attitude to the professional intellectual can be seen with absolute clarity in Vyshinsky's cross-examination of Bukharin.³ No doubt, whatever the merits of the case, the success of Lysenko has been helped by the picture of

¹ The fountainhead is in Marshal Stalin's own writings and the *History of the C.P.S.U.(B)*. (Moscow, 1939). The most developed contemporary instance is the Bureharest organ of the Cominform, *For a Lasting Peace and a People's Democracy*.

² In such areas the idea of progress does not come, as so often in the West, as dead and false, but as new and exciting and true. 'Progressive' is still an attribute of virtue for the eastern intellectual and the western manual worker, and Marxism is 'progressive'. With this is linked, but it is another subject, the Marxist praise for Youth and faith in the young — similar points could also be made about the emancipation of women.

³ v. *Report of Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet 'Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites'*. Moscow, March 2nd-13th, 1938, p. 421 et. seq. (Peoples Commissariat of Justice of the U.S.S.R.) A recent and milder case concerns the reactions of the Hungarian Communist Party to the critic and philosopher Lukacs — in English v. JOZSEF REVAL, *Lukacs and Socialist Realism*. London, 1950.

the 'new Soviet man', rising, from outside the institutions of orthodox science, to denounce these institutions. Bolshevism can take advantage of popular ambivalence to the work of mind and turn from scholasticism to simplicity and back again in its argument with ease. The popular reverence for learning and the popular confidence in the untutored wisdom of the masses are equal and supporting notes in the chord of Marxism.

In countries where there is a tradition of an inspired book — Bible, Koran, Confucian classics, etc. — Marxism with its texts of varying difficulty can play much the same social role, but with the added interest that at least as long as Marshal Stalin lives the texts are not complete. The possession of such texts has many advantages. The first is the use of them, various in origin and date and subject, to provide a mosaic of accepted doctrine which may in fact embody a good argument or conceal a bad or absent one. No Communist can be omniscient: but, sufficiently learned in Bolshevik literature, he can appear very near it, and the consistency of his vocabulary will suggest a consistency and coherence of thought reassuring both to him who commands it and to him who reads or listens. Combined with the fact that the Communist Party nearly always has a 'line' on every subject, this dialectical readiness is very impressive especially in societies not highly verbally sophisticated.

Secondly, in an organization in which the purge is an accepted institution and in which a change in policy can often be equated with a treachery *ex ante*, the ascription of this crime to textual misinterpretation or distortion is very convenient.¹ It can be argued, though never as nakedly as this, that if Marxism is the one true scientific method, then any failure in the world of practice must be because of an incorrect application of theory; but, as the theory is claimed to be very simple, such error can only be the consequence of malignancy. The firing squad is no inappropriate institution to close such a syllogism. In fact by arguing that Marxism is very simple when it is, in fact, very complex and uncertain, people can be easily convinced of inadequacy or guilt.

Thirdly, there is in Marxism a ladder of knowledge, a *scala scientiae*, which is closely but not uniformly correlated with party position. The study of Marxism is repeatedly stressed as desirable in Communist circles, and eminence in the party (by catching the notice of its officials) turns often on dialectical ability in defence of some new change in the line or of some overtly difficult or unpopular policy. The whole institutional structure of the party, which is not under discussion here, facilitates this process in the recruitment of

¹ Cf. the series of verbatim reports of state trials from that of the Industrial Party, to 1938 in the U.S.S.R. and the more recent east-European trials of Petkov, Rajk, Kostov and Vogeler, all of which are available in English translation.

the Communist élite. The mechanisms of denunciation and demotion turn largely on learned criticism, and the *furor theologicus* since Marx (with some slight help from Engels) wrote *Die Heilige Familie* has been a feature of Communist polemic. Marxism, as has already been said, gives a confidence in 'being in on' things, and 'with' them. There are degrees in this, and the double ladder of knowledge and office within Communist parties makes the ascent of these degrees desirable — especially as they give not merely understanding but power and personal security.¹

This is not all. The intellectual in the present century has increasingly found himself

... a stranger and afraid
In a world I never made.

The Communist Parties, east and west, have offered two kinds of human and one of cosmic comradeship. To be an intellectual in the West is (for Britain at least, in 1951 it would be better to say, was) to be déclassé either upward or downward. In one case he was ashamed and resentful of his original class, in the other for his original class. Membership of a Communist Party provides the microcosm of a classless society and comradeship in it. Secondly it provides a sense of unity with the oppressed, and for those who are déclassé downward it provides an expiation and, in day to day political work, a genuine personal atonement, for feelings of class guilt. Thirdly it provides a comradeship, a pantheist and Whitmanesque camaraderie, with the universe. It is a poor joke perhaps which equates 'anomie' with the opposite of bonhomie, but for the western intellectual there is a sense in which this was exactly the truth about the substitution which adherence to Communism offered. It made man at one with society not as constituted but as it must be, and at one with the universe in which he lived. This is no small gift. In the East the intellectual far more than in the West is always déclassé, and this is in particularly true of Asia and Africa. Bolshevism plays the same part there as it did throughout the West in the '30s but to a smaller degree today. But it does more: as suggested earlier, it promises hope and dignity, and these not merely for a class but for a people as a whole. At the same time it gives a concrete vision of personal power to which the gateway is an understanding of the Marxist theory. In the East the sacred books clearly guarantee a deliverance, on earth and now, to men and areas where this faith had hitherto been chimeric and attenuated beyond hope.

Conspiracy is part of the tradition of Communist organization.

¹ An interesting and rather touching example of this, showing also the part of practical work in the economic field, will be found in F. DUBKOVETSKY, *Advancing to Communism: Notes of a Pioneer of Collective Farming in the Ukraine*. Moscow, 1950.

To be a member of a conspiracy is in some sense to have a private revelation, a knowledge denied all others outside the group. It involves sacrifice, a payment of those vicarious psychological debts that cling inevitably to man as a social animal. Not all — in England probably not many — Communists are engaged in conspiracy, but there is a habit of mind which goes with the very possibility of conspiracy, of 'going underground' (even where illegality is not involved), which alters the structure of knowledge in the head of the Communist. And it encourages the emergence of a 'double' morality, whereby the party member can display entirely different 'in-group' and 'out-group' behaviour.

Inside the party group we saw the double ladder of promotion by words and by works. The words are inevitably often casuistry and this applies both in mass-work where all is not revealed to the audience, and in work in the branch or cell where the major premises of action and of discourse are essentially tacit even if known. Again the mind is compartmentalized, and when we add to this the linguistic debasement of the Bolshevik thought world, the psychological impact of membership is such that the Communist becomes capable of a range of intellectual behaviour hitherto impossible to him. He accepts contradictions and denies facts in a way disconcerting to the non-Bolshevik, and frequently he does this in good faith. Even where words have constant denotations between Communist and non-Communist, they may bear entirely different connotations. Moreover, in a sense unusual outside the party organization, they may change connotation with context at high speed and with baffling consequences. And it is here, where we deal with Orwell's 'Double-think', that predictions of Communist behaviour go most astray.¹ It is not only in vocabulary but in usage that anyone who has to deal with Communists should be trained. 'Double-think' is also double-edged, and the Communists frequently are its dupes — though no doubt they gain more than they lose from the practice.

The Bolshevik's contempt for personal freedom sharply separates him from the traditions of the English, American and French revolutions. Many thinkers — Burke, Brownson, Tocqueville, Acton and Burckhardt, for example — have postulated a profound incompatibility between liberty and equality. To those who accept this

¹ George Orwell in 1984 was very shrewd on this point, but he made 'Double-think' unnecessarily formal, overt, and planned. Such a system would in fact be socially unworkable. In general, Orwell is an inadequate guide to Communism. Disraeli said that a public school is a microcosm of society, and Orwell seems often merely to translate his experience of Eton (with some reference to the war-time B.B.C. and the post-1945 world) into the future as the image in little of his coming society. This may sound far-fetched, but a comparison of 1984 and Mr Cyril Connolly's *Enemies of Promise* will perhaps justify it. It is clear that Orwell was unaware of the parallel.

view, Bolshevism is but another example of the passion for equality making vain the hope of liberty. But, whatever the truth of this view is, the Bolshevik sacrifice of liberty is made possible and acceptable by intellectual mechanisms which reinforce each other. Both of these are buttressed by the fact that, in a world in which responsibility seems to grow as power lessens, freedom is a burden; and Bolshevism is a system which excludes much of the weight of personal choice. I say 'excludes', but to the Communist a better word might be 'postpones'. After the revolution, after the dictatorship of the proletariat, comes freedom, but a freedom that does not burden, for human nature will have been re-made to innocence, and human life re-moulded to simplicity. Until then humanity must be re-educated by history and by the chief agent of history, the Communist Party. In the name of education how many crimes have been committed! This argument, however, is a sop to the Communist who is genuinely concerned with the problem of freedom. He can also accept it because, after all, Marxism shows there is such an inevitable, if grim, period which cannot be avoided. (No Communists take seriously Lord Keynes's phrase that in the long run we are all dead, and in this is part of their strength.) Casuistry, too, suggests that there 'is more than one kind of freedom', and that the freedoms of the person and expression are comparatively unimportant to most of mankind as compared with the blessings of a just economy.

This is the second mechanism whereby freedom can be, not rejected, but removed from among the practical problems of the present. For most of mankind throughout the world's history the economic problem has been primary and economic techniques have been such that non-economic aspiration has not been open to any but the few. I do not believe that mind is a reflex of economic circumstance, but it was an accurate insight of Marx to see that it is often so. By offering economic advantage and economic equality simultaneously, Communism brings a hope that is both material and psychological — the belief that after the revolution bellies will be fuller and the contumely of wealth no longer present to mock honest poverty.¹ Among industrial workers throughout the old world this is a significant hope, but in the peasantries of Asia and Africa it is more, and it is welcomed with the zeal of religious conversion. The liberties of person and expression are among the highest of human values, but in countries used to despotism tempered by anarchy and corruption, they must seem flat and irrelevant when so much remains to be done for equality and an equal advance to a modest plenty.

Again we encounter that ideological strength in Bolshevism

¹ The perpetration of economic inequality inside the U.S.S.R. can be explained as a transient necessity and contrasted with the allegedly (and quite plausibly) greater inequities of other societies.

whereby contraries can be held together in the mind. There are three ways in which the compartmentalized psychology of the Communist can do this: by use of an ambiguous vocabulary, by use of the dialectic, and by a careful juggling with the priorities of the Bolshevik future. In countries remote from the West the whole process can be carried on the more freely, for it is not easy to believe good of one's conquerors, while western administrators have seldom mirrored the more profound social content of their societies, and to believe in the evil and the approaching doom of the West is to believe more readily in the future of one's own land. In all this the greatest political invention, however imperfectly realized, of Europe is forgotten and liberty is the victim of motives which, however mistaken, are at least strong and understandable.

The prestige of a science, the promise of a revelation, the hope of equality, are all seen against a succession of prophets and leaders. The exciting drama of Bolshevik ideology comes right in history through the intermediary of a royal line of prophet beings succeeding in success not by birth nor by appointment as did the Antonines, but by a divine election where history replaces God. Marx certainly took himself with preternatural seriousness as a thinker and a leader (though less so as a man), and Engels when Marx was safely dead became much more pontifical than before. Lenin was in dead earnest in all he did and Trotsky was undeniably vain, but it was only after 1924 that deification and personal adulation became part of the institutional structure of Bolshevik leadership.

This transition was important. The dangers of split and internal feud within the ranks of a revolutionary organization become much more serious in their possible consequences once power has been attained, and at the same time the difficulties of concrete policy decisions, and the possibility of disagreement about these, greatly increases. Marxism by its combination of ambiguity and theology offers a field for protracted internal argument which can lead to real differences on policy. Also Marxism is complex and it is not always easily practicable to deduce the appropriate act from the doctrine in any given situation. As a result an infallible leader solves many problems. He maintains unity of thought and action and saves the ordinary party member many of the difficulties and dangers of thought. In those areas where there is a tradition of divine leadership his presence is a reassurance and a guarantee.¹

¹ When the edge of the sword of poverty was biting into the bone,
 Lenin Pasha arose
 And, facing the Sultan and all the rich, he said, —
 'I am a friend of the poor and a brother to all the poor.
 Come, we shall fight to the death!'

(From an Armenian poem quoted by W. Kolarz, *Stalin and Eternal Russia*, London, 1944.)

But it is not enough to have a leader of this sort; he must be placed in a succession — a succession which, coming last in time, he will crown. This is the role of Marshal Stalin. Errors, however, will still be made, policies changed, and the 'monolith' of the party (to use a favourite phrase) will be revealed as spurious unless a scapegoat can be found. In addition the danger of all despots is the palace revolution; men who have made one revolution may make another. The institution of the purge and the incarnate personal enemy therefore occupies a place in the ideology.

Bolshevism has many devils, and men in the misery of this condition enjoy an enemy. Orwell, I think, was wrong in believing that a Trotsky-devil is necessary to a Bolshevik society which still has external enemies, but Trotsky was undoubtedly necessary if the '30s were to be weathered by Bolshevism. He is still useful, but the foreign capitalist is more permanent and useful, especially with his retinue of 'Social-Fascist fakers', and internal class-enemies and Kulaks. In denouncing these as at once dangerous and futile, Bolshevik invective is found in its most typical forms.

With regard to these incarnate devils, the purge serves a double purpose — it guarantees the vigilance and care of the leadership, and it frightens those who are even momentarily dissident. Confession, leaving no doubt, no possibility of public expostulation, makes assurance doubly sure save where a Radek, double-tongued, or an obdurate Kostov, is in the dock.

The ideology of course finds its succession of father-figures and leaders, and its list of traitorous 'fiends'¹, from Vogt and Bakunin to Tito, inconvenient in the conversion of the sophisticated. On the other hand the intellectually sophisticated persons who join without belief in this aspect of things are rendered malleable by a consciousness of guilt, and of failure in 'Communist understanding'. Those who are repelled would not make good party members anyway.

This structure of concepts with its ambiguities and its logic, its gods and devils, its promises and threats, could never survive, far less expand, had it no foundation in the social realities of the age and in the aspirations of men. In fact the injustice against which Communism appeals is often real even where most unavoidable, and the sense that ancient wrongs are remediable comes with the strength of

¹ 'Trotsky-Bukharin fiends . . . Whiteguard pigmies, whose strength was no more than that of a gnat . . . These Whiteguard insects forgot that the real masters of the Soviet country were the Soviet people, and that the rykovs, bukhharins, zinovievs and kamenevs [sic] were only temporary employees of the state, which could at any moment sweep them out from its offices as so much useless rubbish. These contemptible lackeys of the fascists . . . Trotsky-Bukharin fiends . . . Bukharin Trotsky gang . . .' *History of the C.P.S.U.(B.)*. (Moscow, 1939), pp. 347-8. Cf. G. F. ALEXANDROV and others. JOSEPH STALIN, *A Short Biography*, Moscow 1947, p. 136.

intoxication to all who are or who feel oppressed. In its day to day work, because it does not need to fear office with a troublesome opposition, the Communist organizations of non-Communist countries can be alert and fearless in finding grievances and pertinent in demanding remedies even where none can exist. On issues where there is no over-riding Russian fiat local parties can make use of Marxism as a guide to social reality, to the weak places and the sore spots of society. In these they will effect much, for Marxism, imperfect as science, is diagnostically useful and the grip it gives on the vital processes of society is genuine enough. Communist parties can always attain some measure of sociological realism by virtue of the more important aspects of Marxist thought so long as Russia does not interfere. In addition they can be patient in the promise of victory and the knowledge that with victory they have the right, the duty and the means to destroy all rivals. Recruited predominantly from the workers and peasants, Communists know where the shoe in fact pinches, though often the ideology forbids the full exploitation or even comprehension of this knowledge. The normal consequence, however, is the strengthening of the hold on the political situation if the leaders are not too casuistical or intellectualized to understand the led.

But even with the limited but real strength which the genuinely scientific part of Marxist sociology gives, with the ancient grievances of many and the dazzle of the ideology, Marxism could be expected to have only a limited attractiveness (especially for the unsophisticated) if it made no appeal to charity, to good-will and to a disinterested desire to emancipate mankind. Religious fanaticism often, it is true, dispenses with these motives and yet makes converts; but its path is not made easier on this account. And it is at this point that Marxism is particularly interesting. In the literature of Marxism hatred plays a far larger part than love, and disinterestedness is dismissed as a 'bourgeois' illusion. The language of 'bourgeois' ideals appears, but its use is admittedly disingenuous: justice is part of 'double-think' and comradeship is a concept as much of exclusion as of alliance. Indeed, universal charity is expressly postponed to another world, to the millenium, and the less said about it in the present circumstances of the world the better: it is an enervating preoccupation. The immediate appeal is to a desire to be on the winning side in a battle with the intolerable world. And the unlikely vision is offered of a world of peace and loving kindness springing (dialectically, we must suppose) from the practice of hatred and brutality. And yet, there is no doubt that the Marxist ideology can appeal to men moved by a large and genuine compassion. How this can be is difficult to determine. It is improbable that there is here nothing but illusion, that the charitable man can find inspiration in

Marxism only when he is also preternaturally gullible. And since the charity is often as innocent and genial and straightforward as it can be, it is not enough to recognize in Marxism only the perverted love which conceals itself in cruelty. What seems more likely is that at this important point Marxism is drawing upon emotions, foreign to it, which have a real and important place in our civilization and also in the larger socialist tradition. In short, to many the appeal of Marxism springs from the reflection of a less restricted emotional world which the ideology throws back because of the ambiguous brightness of its surface. And often it is the discovery that this is no part of the ideology, but the image of a world outside, which moves a man to disgust and to desert what he once found so appealing.

DESCARTES ON METHOD AND PHYSIOLOGY

A. C. CROMBIE

PASCAL said he could not forgive Descartes for finding no place for God except to explain how the world was set going. 'After that', he said, 'there was nothing further for God to do.' He went on to assert that while, broadly speaking, it could be said that events in the physical world were the product of 'figure and motion', to consider the whole creation as nothing but a machine was ridiculous. 'And,' he concluded, 'even if it were true we reckon that the whole of philosophy would not be worth one hour of suffering.'

Like Socrates turning away from Anaxagoras, Pascal turned away from Descartes' philosophy of nature to more immediate human experience. He saw that the mechanistic philosophy put forward by Descartes was likely to come to absorb the whole of existence, and this is of course what it did, or seemed to do. In this connection a more recent opinion on Descartes is worth quoting, to show what he looks like to a philosopher as acute as Professor Broad after three centuries of 'figure and motion'. In an article contributed to the *Cambridge Historical Journal* in 1944 Professor Broad wrote:

At certain periods in the development of human knowledge it may be profitable and even essential for generations of scientists to act on a theory which is philosophically quite ridiculous. And the success of this procedure may blind people for centuries to the fact that its assumptions are quite incredible if taken to be the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

The most important fact about Descartes' position in the history of science is that he was first and foremost a philosopher and philosophically an extreme rationalist, and only secondarily a scientist, in the modern sense of those terms. He wanted to construct a single system that would explain everything from the movements of the heavenly bodies to the processes of chemistry and physiology. Moreover, he wanted his system to express the truth about Nature with certainty and, as far as it had been completed, to be final.

The modern distinction between the words 'philosopher' and 'scientist' did not of course exist in the seventeenth century and what is now called 'science' was then often called 'experimental philosophy'. But Descartes characterizes his own position very clearly in the judgment he passed on Galileo. 'I shall begin this letter with my observations on the work of Galileo', he wrote in a

letter to Mersenne in 1638. First he commended him because he 'attempts to examine physical matters by the methods of mathematics. In this I am in entire agreement with him, and I believe that there is absolutely no other way of discovering the truth. But', he went on to complain, 'it seems to me that he has merely sought reasons for certain particular effects, without having considered the first causes of nature; and thus that he has built without a foundation'.

The foundation on which Descartes tried to construct his own system expressing 'the first causes of nature' was his method. An extreme rationalism of Descartes' type played as great a part in the seventeenth-century scientific movement as the more cautious seeking for 'reasons for certain particular effects' found in men like Galileo and William Harvey. It was in fact Descartes' claim of the all-embracing certainty of his method and of the all-embracing conclusiveness of the results he himself had obtained with it that constituted his chief challenge to his age. He had a genius for provoking others to thought and as often as not to disagreement, and his cock-sure simplifications opened up lines of attack and exposed contradictions to his contemporaries and successors, even when he did not see them himself.

I shall try to place Descartes' method against the seventeenth-century background and to indicate briefly how it influenced the future of physiology.

Preoccupation with method did not of course begin with Descartes or even with Francis Bacon. They were late comers at the end of a very long tradition, as indeed is obvious from reading their works. Their contribution was to crystallize an important part of this tradition, with some original additions, in two very clearly written books; Bacon's *Novum Organum*, published in 1620 and Descartes' *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, published posthumously in 1701. These books, like their authors, were the complements of each other, Bacon's emphasizing the inductive and Descartes' the mathematical aspects of science. Each was strong where the other was weak. Yet even so they did not cover the whole field of scientific method as it was practised in the seventeenth century, for both were weak where Galileo and Newton and Harvey were strong, namely in the proper understanding of the experimental method.

Scientific method as conceived by Descartes and his contemporaries had, then, three main aspects, the inductive, the mathematical and the experimental, and in fact the function of each in scientific investigation and explanation had been the chief preoccupation of a line of logicians and natural philosophers stretching back to Robert Grosseteste in the thirteenth century. This preoccupation seems to have been one of the principal causes, though of course not

the only one, to which modern science owes its origin. Properly to understand Descartes' position in history it is necessary to take a brief glance at this earlier tradition.

First, what was the problem these scientific methodologists felt themselves compelled to answer? It was in fact an extension to the natural world of the old philosophical problem of certainty. This problem had been the chief preoccupation of the whole rationalist tradition of European philosophy since Plato, and at the threshold of the Middle Ages had been profoundly analysed by St Augustine. It was a belief held in this tradition that what was certain was true of reality. The work on scientific method from Grosseteste to Descartes was therefore in the first place an attempt to discover how it was possible to know anything for certain about Nature, and then to construct systems embodying that knowledge.

In practice this came down to an examination of the three problems mentioned above: the use of induction, of mathematics and of experiment in science. All three were examined with success by Grosseteste and Roger Bacon and their followers. Basing themselves on newly translated works of Aristotle and Euclid, they held that, as in geometry, a particular fact was explained when it was deduced from a general principle or set of principles which related it to other facts. The main problems then were first, how, from a survey of the facts of the case, to reach such a general principle or explanatory theory; and secondly, how to distinguish between true and false, or complete and incomplete, theories. The first was the problem of induction, and of this Roger Bacon gave an elaborate account in his attempt to find what he called the 'form' of the rainbow, rather as Francis Bacon was to try to show how to find the 'form' of heat. In both cases the inductive process led from a survey of instances to an empirical generalization, which in its turn suggested a theory or theories of a more abstract type, for example that the rainbow was caused by the reflection of light in a particular way from raindrops, or that heat was caused by the motion of particles.

It was recognized in the thirteenth century that a theory more abstract than a simple empirical generalization could not be inferred from the facts, but that it could be tested. Indeed, perhaps the outstanding contribution of these medieval writers was to show that the use of experiment in science was to distinguish between true and false theories by seeing whether the consequences deduced from them did in fact happen. Moreover, under the influence of Platonism, it was generally held in this school of thought, of which the chief centres were Oxford and Paris, that the best kind of theory was one in which observed facts were correlated by means of mathematics, and indeed that only mathematics made Nature intelligible. It was recognized also that since the same facts could often be

deduced from more than one theory, and since it was impossible to exhaust all the possibilities, therefore the verification of a particular theory did not exclude the possibility that another one might be true in the same sense. In fact, science dealt only with the probable, the useful and the unfalsified.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries outstanding use of the inductive, mathematical and experimental methods were made in mechanics, astronomy, optics and other sciences. Mention need be made of only one example, from which Descartes was to benefit, namely the work of the Saxon Dominican, Theodoric of Freiberg, on the rainbow. Independently of some Arab contemporaries whose work did not become known in Europe until the twentieth century, Theodoric between 1304 and 1310 correctly explained the primary rainbow by means of two refractions and one reflection of light in individual raindrops, and the secondary rainbow by means of a second reflection before the final refraction. He correctly explained the reversal of colours in the secondary bow. In building up this explanation Theodoric had continual recourse to experiments in which he observed the paths of the rays and the production of colours in light passing through hexagonal crystals and spherical glass flasks filled with water. This work was cited in several sixteenth-century books and in his *Météores* Descartes described similar experiments and gave the same explanation, though with the important addition that he deduced the paths of the rays from the sine law of refraction.

One thing above all which Descartes shared with his Platonist predecessors and his contemporaries was the rationalist ideal of discovering behind the changing appearances of sensible experience the unchanging truth about Nature. In fact the existence of this ideal is one of the most striking characteristics of seventeenth-century science. It produced the supreme interest in method found in the writings of most of the great scientists from Galileo to Hooke and Newton, the greatest of seventeenth-century system builders; even though, as with Newton, a deepened understanding of method tended in the end to destroy the original ideal. It produced the endless discussions of the experimental method, the mathematical method, and the numerous 'methods' put forward by botanists and zoologists in search of a 'natural' as opposed to an 'artificial' system of classification of plants and animals. To point to this ideal is not of course to minimize the importance simply of the success of the mathematico-experimental method in encouraging its further application: in fact its success was the only sure guarantee of its validity, and one of the most important factors promoting scientific progress was surely just the sheer accumulation of results. Nor is it to minimize the importance of the utilitarian motive, which can in

fact be found in the later sections of Descartes' *Dioptrique* where he gives an account of lens grinding and spectacles. But no one who has read widely in seventeenth-century scientific literature would deny the influence of the philosophical motive outlined. In Descartes perhaps it was supreme and, moreover, his celebrated doubt was never more than philosophic: it was a preliminary to certainty.

What Descartes wanted, then, was a method that would make it possible to discover the truth about Nature and guarantee the certainty of the result. 'There is need of a method for finding out the truth' was the fourth of his *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*; and the first part of his programme for reforming science, as he tells us in Part III of his intellectual autobiography, the *Discourse on Method*, was to find 'the true Method of arriving at a knowledge of all the things of which my mind was capable'. He wanted the true method: apparently there was only one. He went on in the same section of the *Rules*:

By a method I mean certain and simple rules such that, if a man observe them accurately, he shall never assume what is false as true and will never spend his mental efforts to no purpose, but will always gradually increase his knowledge and so arrive at a true understanding of all that does not surpass his powers.

The essence of the method set out in this work was a set of rules for perfecting the two intellectual acts by which he considered knowledge was obtained. The first was the act by which the mind intuited 'simple natures', for example, extension, figure, movement, thought, which could not be reduced to anything simpler and therefore had no logical definitions. He gave rules for choosing and arranging the facts for this act of intuition, including a form of induction involving the collection of instances and the elimination of false hypotheses. The second act was the deduction from the intuited truths of detailed consequences that were both certain and true of reality. Sometimes, as in the work on the rainbow set out in *Les Météores*, Descartes experimentally verified these consequences; in principle he seems to have intended this to be done.

Among the 'simple natures' that were the object of Descartes' intuition were two ultimate substances into what the created world was divided. As he wrote in his *Principles of Philosophy*, Part I, Principle 53:

there is always one principal property of substance which constitutes its nature and essence, and on which all the others depend. Thus extension in length, breadth and depth constitutes the nature of corporeal substance, and thought constitutes the nature of thinking substance. For all else that may be attributed of body presupposes extension and is but a mode of this

extended thing, as everything that we find in mind is but so many diverse forms of thinking. Thus, for example, we cannot conceive figure but as in an extended thing, nor movement but as in an extended space; so imagination, feeling and will exist only in a thinking thing.

The interesting thing about this passage is not only that in it Descartes crystallized with characteristic starkness a distinction which is at least in some sense factual, but also that he did so in terms of two *substances*. He used in fact the traditional language of describing occurrences in terms of attributes inhering in real persisting substances, but he identified the substance of the physical world with geometrical extension. This had for him the enormous advantage that, as he said in the second of his *Rules*, 'of all the sciences known as yet, Arithmetic and Geometry alone are free from any taint of falsity or uncertainty'. They 'alone deal with an object so pure and uncomplicated that they need make no assumptions at all which experience renders uncertain, but wholly consist in the rational deduction of consequences'. Therefore, he went on in Rule IV, a 'Universal Mathematics', a 'general science to explain that element as a whole which gives rise to problems about order and measurement, restricted as they are to no special subject matter', would provide certain knowledge of the physical world.

Descartes made his own outstanding contribution to that Universal Mathematics in his *Géométrie*, which was published in 1637 along with his *Discours de la Méthode* and two works in which he exemplified his method, *La Dioptrique* and *Les Météores*. His attempt to carry out his programme of reducing physiology to mathematics is set out in the greatest detail in *L'Homme*, which originally formed part of *Le Monde, ou Traité de la Lumière*, and in *De la Formation du Fœtus*. The last two works were first published posthumously in 1662 and 1664, respectively. He resumed some of his general ideas also in his *Méditations de Prima Philosophia* (1641), on *Principia Philosophiae* (1644), and in several letters.

At the end of his *Discourse on Method* Descartes said that he would try 'to arrive at rules for Medicine more assured than those which have yet been attained'. His principal contribution to physiology was the conception of the body as a machine and therefore explicable by the known laws of mechanics. Coming from a man who completely misunderstood the most outstanding contemporary contribution to the mechanics of the body, and who, in the books he specifically devoted to the subject, added (except in the study of vision) not a single new fact to physiology, this was a remarkably fertile idea. In principle it has in fact inspired physiologists ever since. One might say that for the last three centuries physiology has made

its remarkable progress by working out Descartes' idea with Harvey's methods. The classical expression of the body as a machine occurs in Part I of *L'Homme*:

I assume that the body is nothing else than a statue or machine of clay . . . We see clocks, artificial fountains, mills, and other similar machines which, although made by man, are not without the power of moving themselves in many different ways; and it seems to me that I should not be able to imagine so many kinds of movements in this one, which I am supposing to be made by the hand of God, nor attribute to it so much of artifice, that you would not have reason to think there might be still more. . . .

I desire you to consider next that all the functions which I have attributed to this machine, such as the digestion of food, the beating of the heart and arteries, the nourishment and growth of the members, respiration, waking, and sleeping; the impressions of light, sounds, odours, tastes, heat and other such qualities on the organs of the external senses; the impression of their ideas on the common sense and the imagination; the retention of imprinting of these ideas upon the memory; the interior motions of the appetites and passions; and, finally, the external movements of all members, which follow so suitably as well the actions of objects which present themselves to sense, as the passions and impressions which are formed in the memory, that they imitate in the most perfect manner possible those of a real man; I desire, I say, that you consider that all these functions follow naturally in this machine simply from the arrangement of its parts, no more nor less than do the movements of a clock, or other *automata*, from that of its weights and its wheels; so that it is not at all necessary for their explanation to conceive in it any other soul, vegetative or sensitive, nor any other principle of motion and life, than its blood and its spirits, set in a motion by the heat of the fire which burns continually in its heart, and which is of a nature no different from all fires in inanimate bodies.

When he came down to details Descartes' physiology was hardly in advance of Galen's. He attributed the processes of the body to the activities of the traditional 'spirits', even though they were slightly more streamlined and more *geometrico demonstrata*. For example, he explained the action of the nervous system by the movement of animal spirit in the ventricles of the brain and along the nerves, which he regarded as hollow tubes. Even the role of the pineal gland as a sort of valve controlling the movements of animal spirits in the brain had an analogy in the ideas of Mondino and some Renaissance

anatomists influenced by Galen, though the theory that the muscles were moved by the fluids entering them from the end of the nerve and making them swell up seems to have been an original contribution of the geometrical spirit.

Descartes was one of the first to accept Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood but he failed to grasp the essential point, that the heart was a pump. He still regarded it as the centre of vital heat. His embryology shows the same tendency simply to geometrize Galen. He tried to account for the development of the foetus and its organs by means of mixtures of fluids and particles obeying the laws of mechanics. The origin of movement in the heart, for example, he attributed to the deflection from rectilinear motion of particles so that they collected and dilated and pursued a circular path round the body.

In one field of physiology, however, Descartes made some real contributions to knowledge. The sections of *La Dioptrique* and *L'Homme* on vision contain remarkably accurate accounts of the formation of the image on the retina and of various other aspects of vision. Some of this work was not original: for example, the experiment described in *La Dioptrique* in which the back of an ox's eye was removed and an image made to form on a piece of paper placed instead of the retina, had been carried out by the Jesuit Father Scheiner. It is perhaps characteristic of Descartes that his original contributions to sensory physiology were the result of acute reasoning rather than experiment, and it was by arguing from the known facts that he was led to recognize two centuries before Johannes Müller what was to be called the 'specific energy of nerves', and to show that the fibres of the two optic nerves must remain distinct after crossing in the optic chiasma, for otherwise binocular vision would be impossible.

Certainly the influence of Descartes' mechanical physiology was not always good. For example, a too literal belief among some of his followers that the body was nothing but a machine—that the stomach was a retort, the heart a spring, the muscles and bones a system of cords, struts and pulleys, the lung a bellows and the kidney a sieve—definitely held up chemical physiology until quite late in the eighteenth century.

Perhaps that sort of thing is always the price of the success that follows Descartes' type of inspiration, and even when he was 'philosophically quite ridiculous' he often raised a problem to which the answer has still to be found. The classical example is the problem of mind and body. A contemporary, Gassendi, pointed out in his *Cinquièmes Objections* to Descartes' *Méditations* that it was formally impossible for an unextended thinking substance to have any point of contact with an extended unthinking substance. Descartes' theory that mind and body made contact in the pineal gland was ridiculous

from the beginning. But the problem he raised has been an open pit to catch star-gazing physiologists ever since and a thorn in the flesh of philosophers.

Like many great men, then, Descartes has had an influence both good and bad. He would have been proud to have been called a father of modern physiology, but what would he have said of T. H. Huxley's statements in the essay he wrote on him in 1870?

I am prepared to go with the Materialists wherever the true pursuit of the path of Descartes may lead them . . . I hold, with the Materialist, that the human body, like all living bodies, is a machine, all the operations of which will, sooner or later, be explained on physical principles. I believe that we shall, sooner or later, arrive at a mechanical equivalent of consciousness, just as we have arrived at a mechanical equivalent of heat.

A mechanical equivalent of consciousness. Descartes would certainly have regarded that as ridiculous. Perhaps, had he guessed at this adaptation of his idea, he may even have sympathized with Pascal's prophetic uneasiness. Nothing would have seemed to him more a perversion of his intentions than to take half his system and make of it the whole truth. Yet Descartes would not have a real case against Huxley and those like him, for it was Descartes who gave the most powerful support to an even greater perversion of which Huxley's was merely a consequence. It was he above all his contemporaries who took assumptions of method adapted to providing 'reasons for certain particular effects' and made of them 'the whole truth and nothing but the truth'.

BOOK REVIEWS

L. B. NAMIER: *Europe in Decay. A Study in Disintegration 1936-1940. Macmillan, 16s.*

This collection of essays is intended, according to the preface, to serve as the first of a series of supplements to the author's *Diplomatic Prelude* in the form of critical surveys of historical material published meanwhile, but which is not yet complete enough to justify a re-written edition of the earlier work. The subject matter of this first instalment is at once distinctive and highly relevant, consisting as it does of memoirs of the French defeat and the armistice régime, the records of Italian politics and policy in Ciano's various papers, as well as the more central revelations of the appeasement era in the German and British Foreign Office documents published to date, with their evidence on the Anglo-French negotiations with the Russians in 1939 and on the course of Nazi-Soviet relations which marked the failure of these. In the interpretation of diplomatic events and their sequence, and in the use of reserves of information from unexpected sources to reinforce the front of his argument, Professor Namier's mastery is incontestable. Where the main documentary evidence is already available, his exposition is categorical; where it is yet to come the delicacy of his treatment will surely allow him to complement rather than to correct as a result of later and intenser knowledge. He neither claims nor reveals any refinements of strategic argument; indeed he may be suspected like too many historians and politicians of treating a 'division' in his first or second-hand judgments of military potential as an invariable international unit like an ampere or a metric ton. Yet in the relevant chapters, including a review of *The Gathering Storm*, he makes at least as good a case as Mr Churchill himself against the value of Munich as a respite, by piling political arguments on the controversial military one. Indeed the military argument itself requires clarification and refreshment with precise evidence. Mr Churchill's picture of the German army at the time of the *Anschluss* has recently been respectfully amended by General Guderian in his *Erinnerungen eines Soldaten* and one may incline to the latter's view that the 'obsolete armies' of the Western democracies, if they had gone to war in 1938, would have remained impotent while the Czech army was being destroyed. The question has been over-simplified; the relative development of German air power and British air power and defence has to be considered but so has that of German and Russian armoured power if the times of all offensive actions are to be antedated by at least a year. And it is surely not so likely as Professor Namier seems to assume that the democracies could have had both Poland and Russia as allies. If not, how was the 'immediate and effective aid' — not open war against Germany — which was all Moscow promised Prague, to be brought to bear? By token air support in hopeless ground fighting and by token strategic bombing?

So far as the surface of European *Grosse Politik* is concerned, few of these brilliant studies are likely to be superseded; where judgments upon individuals enter and the appreciation of the dependence of European diplomacy on the tides of world history fails to enter, it may be otherwise. Professor Namier's elegant appraisal of the decay of French national power and confidence which the honours of 1914-18 could not arrest, leads him to regard the part of French politicians and statesmen in the era of appeasement as inevitable but not, it seems, excusable. He may be justified in maintaining that the self-righteous apologies of MM Flandin and Bonnet are less telling than would have been admissions on their part that they were both the types and the victims of the *dégringolade*, but such is not the fashion of modern French memoirs. The grand manner of Chateaubriand and even Ollivier has given way to the labyrinthine defences of

Poincaré, and the *Schadenfreude* of Caillaux. Professor Namier sometimes gives the impression that he is writing about Munich and what followed from the precarious vantage-ground of Yalta and Potsdam, and his implicit assumption that the sole problem of Europe in the 1930s was a revived German militarism disguises the fact that the pseudo-racial fascism which came to control it was only one version of the twentieth-century revolution in which different men reasonably saw different evils and virtues, dangers and opportunities. Armistice-mongering — even 'Vichyism' — was not and is not the only political sin in France. Nor was anglophobia, and British historians may in due course come to the conclusion that it was a venial error for Frenchmen in June 1940 not to realize that Dunkirk was a first step in the process of their 'restoration'. Professor Namier cannot refrain from general judgments even on M Reynaud in this context. He finds discrepancies between the latter's own account of his position on the armistice question and other evidence. They are of no great historical importance and the reflections which ensue on this gallant and far-seeing Frenchman's selection by history for his task are somewhat otiose.

A similar asperity towards the German generals who failed to lead the internal 'opposition' to Hitler and towards the opposition for failing to lead the masses is contained in too slight and noncommittal an essay for it to matter. But the unreserved endorsement of the regulation judgment of Hitler's abilities in the essay on 'Hitler's Foreign Policy' is to be regretted if Professor Namier's great authority helps to defer a balanced reevaluation. A second-hand, highly coloured statement in Erich Kordt's *Wahn und Wirklichkeit* is accepted quite uncritically, although it is surely obvious that no sense on the subject can be obtained from the immediate post war utterances of German ex-bureaucrats or ex-soldiers, all with an axe to grind or an eye to catch, given the atmosphere of their own outraged public opinion and the attitude of the occupying Powers who have not yet demobilized Clio. The tribe has been busy slaying the crocodile-god killed by the white hunter (or was it by another crocodile?) and explaining to missionaries that it was a very incompetent saurian anyhow which would not listen to the tribal elders and warriors — although this can only mean that otherwise it would still be eating calves and babies and apparently missionaries in preference to other crocodiles. Among the latest crop of testimonies, Guderian's and Speidel's memoirs and Heusinger's military scenario, the critic can still find authority for registering Hitler's vast talent or his vast ineptitude. But it seems improbable that the somewhat hysterical generalizations, inside and outside Germany, from Hitler's more hysterical moments will stand up for long, and a beginning of more dispassionate historical analysis may date from the reconstruction of some of Hitler's military papers which has recently been published by Mr Felix Gilbert in America. The German generals are of course inventing a new *Dolchstoß*; last time it was the politics of the civilian masses and this time it is the confusion of political with military leadership which betrayed the German army. This time the legend may be good politics in the interests of Western defence but it is still bad history. However what is more interesting is the motive of foreign historians and publicists in so eagerly denouncing, without a sense of inconsistency, both the pervasive absolutism and also the incompetence of the dictatorship under which the Nazi military and economic achievement was performed. Why is it that wickedness is insufficient abomination? Is it that sin has ceased to have meaning and that we have become infected with the Marx-Leninist classification of 'correct' and 'incorrect' as a substitute for moral judgment?

Professor Namier's indictment of the diplomacy of 'appeasement' is lucid and overwhelming within his terms of reference, but the relevant chapters could prove misleading as permanent historiography through their neglect of factors off the diplomatic record which might surely have been covered by emphatic allusion without any inappropriate digression. There is the failure to recognize Europe's

other enemies; one clear statement that Anglo-French policy was faced in 1938-39 with the alternatives of furthering the power and prestige of the 'Dictatorships' or the 'spread' of 'Bolshevism' (with which they are in these terms curiously contrasted) is exceptional; and even then there is no distinction drawn between the expansion of the latter by conversion or conquest. Then there is the obtrusive contempt of the intellectual error of appeasement. It is questionable whether the formidable exposure of its failure and humiliation gains by this; the problem in the 1930s is now brought nearer to us if we admit that the commitment of Italy at any rate to the full course of aggression looked no more certain in 1936-39 than does the commitment of Soviet-Communist China today. The oversimplification is intensified by a lack of attention to the relation between appeasement and the level of armaments. It is not enough to repeat Mr Churchill's argument on Baldwin's concealment of the truth, and his failure to act on the knowledge of it, lest he should be driven from office. The point is that both political parties as well as the public were overwhelmingly pacific but that the party in power and not the opposition were in favour of radical rearmament, and yet were afraid to defy public opinion by sponsoring it, claiming that the policy of their opponents, if it prevailed, would be even more disastrous than their own. This frustration of parliamentary democracy, with its motives and methods largely approved by the Services and by the bureaucracy at their higher levels, is as essential an entry in the appeasement account as the series of diplomatic miscalculations. Domestic and foreign politics, no more than oecumenical ideologies and local practice, ought not to be kept in isolated compartments when historical judgment leaps from facts to values as Professor Namier's is liable to do.

An explanation of the blank spaces in Professor Namier's picture is of course to be found in the limitations of the documents which provide him with his texts. It is perhaps unfortunate that no evidence bearing on the preoccupation of British diplomacy with the problem of isolationism in the United States is introduced and discussed because European diplomacy, even fifteen years ago, was hardly an 'intelligible field of study' in itself. There is no doubt that appeasement tended to disconcert the White House and the State Department and that it encouraged isolationists of the Left, but there is a case for saying that it gained time for the policy which Roosevelt and Cordell Hull wanted to prevail in the U.S., and that it weakened one serious influence on the side of isolationism — sympathy for German and Italian nationalist grievances. The constant concern of the Foreign Office with American attitudes, especially the faith in ultimate intervention even if 'short of war' deserves testimony; it is not yet apparent from published documents and may never be adequately represented in them because the faith was almost unmentionable in Anglo-American exchanges. So it is a pity that Professor Namier's sole reference to this subject brings out the exception to normal Foreign Office policy in Chamberlain's single-handed and improvident rejection of an American offer of a general conference in Washington in the spring of 1938 on the grounds that it would interfere with his direct negotiations with Italy. Similarly in rebuking the British Government for rejecting the final Soviet terms for a military alliance in 1939, Professor Namier lays all his emphasis on the respect shown for the impracticable Polish objections to Soviet military co-operation in Poland rather than on the impossibility of accepting the Russians' requirement that they should occupy the territory of the Baltic States, a concession which, as was well known before Mr Churchill drew attention to the fact, consideration for American susceptibilities made it impossible to entertain.

Whether Soviet policy during the last two pre-war years had the calm logicity with which Professor Namier seems to credit it is open to question. The offer to intervene on the side of the Czechs in 1938 may have been honest, and it may be that the judgment of the Soviet Government (that it was worth while joining the democracies in 1938 but not in 1939) was based on a correct estimate of a dis-

proportionate increase in German war potential compared to their own, combined with that of the Western democracies, in the intervening year. But if the Soviet Government came to the conclusion that the democracies would not fight, as Professor Namier suggests, under-estimating as they did the resolution rather than the power of France, they were, after all, wrong. And it seems that they were more seriously wrong in failing to realize that Russia was the real secular enemy as well as the ideological enemy of 'Greater Germany', that Hugenberg had been a serious prophet and that no pooling of aggression would avert a German assault in Hitler's own good time. As a result they missed what was on paper at any rate a brilliant military opportunity of taking the initiative in attacking Hitler themselves in May or June 1940, for if the Soviet army was capable of mounting an offensive in 1938 it was certainly capable of doing so two years later.

Furthermore there was the discrepancy between Comintern and *Narkomindel* policy. Just as the Comintern had themselves created half the appeal of Nazism by supplying the challenge of the German Communist party during the 1920s, so in the 1930s they proceeded to do all they could to weaken the resistance of the Western democracies to the now common enemy. If they did not recognize that Nazi Germany was the common enemy but imagined that it was the tool or champion of international or national capitalists, the more fools they. The *Narkomindel* had put the Soviet Union into the League of Nations and concluded the French alliance but the Comintern could not pursue its own corresponding, 'popular front' policy consistently and undoubtedly enjoined the national communist parties, even when calling for war on the Axis, to impair the moral and material resources on which the democracies' chance of early and successful war really depended. No hint of all this is given by Professor Namier, and, although he has perhaps tapered off somewhat the respect for Soviet policy shown in his *Diplomatic Prelude*, the invaders of Finland and of the Baltic States, the involuntary belligerents against Germany and the last minute predatory belligerents against Japan, still appear as the hard headed but frustrated devotees of collective security.

MICHAEL VYVYAN

DAVID THOMSON: *Two Frenchmen*. Cresset Press, 12s. 6d. net.

In this double biography of Pierre Laval and General de Gaulle, the emphasis and interest are inevitably concentrated on their wartime careers. Dr Thomson sees their opposite decisions in 1940 as representing at once a clash of temperaments, a choice by each protagonist of the technique most familiar to him, and — more dubiously — the opposition of two permanent trends in the French political outlook: the parochial, materialist pacifism of the peasantry and the uncompromising, authoritarian imperialism of the towns. He regards each alternative as equally honourable: neither could quickly save French independence, either might do so in the end: the result depended on other Great Powers more than on France: Stresemann's policy was as patriotic as Gambetta's and more successful. (Has anyone else ever mistaken Ribbentrop for Briand?) The unpopular cause is defended with vigour. In 1940 Laval believed, like most realists, that the war was over: and if he continued on his chosen course after 1942, when realism had been proved inadequate, this only demonstrates his vigour, determination and disinterestedness: for by assuming a responsibility he might easily have escaped, he saved France from ills suffered by all other occupied countries — he spared her the Gestapo until 1944, gained some recompense for her deported workers and avoided compulsory labour for women. Since responsibility is regarded as a formal matter of being in office, and since Laval was out from 1936 until June 23rd, 1940, his Parliamentary and Press influence in those years can be ignored, and his role in the critical days minimized. In that admirable book *Democracy in*

France, Dr Thomson wrote (p. 215) that Laval 'took three decisive steps to ensure the capitulation', by persuading the President not to go to North Africa, by lobbying parliamentarians to support an armistice, and by arresting the recalcitrant politicians on board the *Massilia*. Now, he tends to a not proven verdict on the *Massilia* case, and on the other two points it is not the bamboozler but the bamboozled who are found guilty.

Though never blatantly unfair, the treatment of de Gaulle is less sympathetic. His leanings towards authoritarianism are brought out, while Laval's establishment of it is played down. We are warned to be wary of interpretations hostile to Laval, and even of indiscreet Fascist admirers like Montigny: but Muselier and Henri de Kerillis are star witnesses against de Gaulle. And the responsibility of the latter is less strictly construed: since his tactlessness made the Americans suspicious of him, he is partly to blame for the Darlan episode (Dr Thomson sympathizes with Laval's realism but cannot stomach Eisenhower's). De Gaulle has said that in 1946 he preferred resignation to a *coup d'état*: that he contemplated dictatorship is stressed, that he rejected it is not.

Dr Thomson's case is not that collaboration was right and resistance wrong, but that they were complementary ways to preserve French independence, and that the tragedy of post-war France is the Gaullist refusal to admit this. For putting this view, Colonel Rémy had last year to resign from the R.P.F.: but the phrase which he attributed to de Gaulle, that France needed the Pétain string to her bow as well as the de Gaulle string, has never been denied. Yet in 1940, de Gaulle spoke very differently of *Père la Défaite*. For the men of Vichy were not merely accepting the fortunes of war and trying to buy real concessions from Hitler in debased ideological currency. They regarded the military defeat as a political victory over a despised régime and a hated tradition: they rejected the

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ideas of 1789 and the policy of 1939, when France and the British Commonwealth went to war to save Europe. In Laval's words,

Since parliamentary democracy chose to fight against Nazism and Fascism, and since it lost this struggle, it must disappear.

When M Teitgen said,

I know very well all that M Laval has done for his country; but the whole problem is to know whether, in order to defend the body of France, it was necessary to lose her soul

he expressed a difference that was more than tactical: as Dr Thomson rightly comments, to Laval this would have seemed meaningless verbiage.

A book which skilfully presents an unfamiliar foreign viewpoint is always useful; and since some of our prospective allies may prove hard to sell to the British public, this one is even, in a sense, timely. Yet do we really wish, in 1951, to repudiate the men who despaired neither of Britain nor of the Republic, and to extenuate those who sought to turn France into a totalitarian jackal state? In *Democracy in France* (p. 223), Dr Thomson took a harsher view of

the shabby, dusky figure of Laval — prototype of the shadiest type of parliamentary politician, ambitious, unscrupulous and avaricious, ready for any bargain — even to traffic in the bodies of his fellow-countrymen to keep German factories fed with labour.

Second thoughts are not always an improvement.

PHILIP WILLIAMS

HENRY STEELE COMMAGER: *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character since the 1880s.* Oxford University Press, 30s. net.

This book presents a problem to the reviewer. In order to judge it one must be clear about two things: the limits of the subject matter and the nature of the public for which it was written. The intelligent, but uninformed, Englishman, puzzled and apprehensive about the effects of America's impact on his daily life, may be attracted by a book whose title, *The American Mind . . . since the 1880s*, suggests that therein may lie some clues to the mystifying behaviour of Senators Taft and McCarthy, two apparently typical American minds which must have learnt to cerebrate within that period. He will, I fear, be disappointed. One must state at the outset that this is not a book for the uninformed reader; and this in spite of its origin as a course of lectures to Cambridge undergraduates for whom America was still, to put it mildly, a vicarious experience. In these admirably written essays, with their wealth of allusion and force of judgment, Professor Commager assumes a degree of sophistication beyond the broad English reading public. Without some knowledge at least of the names and personalities of the writers with whom he is in fact concerned and of the historical topography through which they move, the reading of this book will not be rewarding. This in itself is no criticism of the book. Professor Commager is entitled to write for what audience he pleases. But even assuming an audience sufficiently responsive to register the full significance of this allusive writing, the book still fails to deliver the goods it advertises in its title.

This is not, in fact, a book about the American mind; but rather a series of able essays, in the historical mode, dealing with dominant trends of thought in various walks of American literary and professional life in the past seventy years, together with two brilliant impressions, to open and close, of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century American. Although in the latter the author makes shrewd and penetrating judgments which relate to American society as a whole, and

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therefore may be said to illuminate the American mind, the body of the book is largely concerned with thinking which in many cases is not exclusively American but relates to European movements, and which, in any case, reflects the minds, not of Americans as a whole, but of the educated classes. In this he seems surprisingly to have fallen into the erroneous assumption that thinking which is articulated to the campus is characteristic of America as a whole. In fact there is a greater disparity between thinking on and off the campus, so to speak, in the United States than perhaps anywhere in Europe. The dynamics of the business community, always hostile to introspection and the reflective life, have turned America's critics and scholars for the most part in on themselves to the extent of becoming almost a separate caste, cut off from public responsibility and therefore from any sensitive response to public thinking.

Hence it is possible for Professor Commager to take us nimbly and ably on a conducted tour of the main galleries of educated thinking without revealing to us the mainsprings of American action in the twentieth century. We learn much of interest to link up American professional thought with what was going on in Europe; but we learn nothing about the basic ways in which the American mind differs, and differs fundamentally, from the European mind. We are reminded of Henry Adams and his rule of phase and Thorstein Veblen and his indictment of galloping capitalism; but we are not shown the way in which these theorists relate to the unprecedented rate of growth which took place in precisely this generation.

A man born in 1880 spent his boyhood in the day of the horse and buggy when life was rural and local, government remote and uncertain in potency and foreign affairs the distant thunder of an alien and suspect world. But by the time of his middle age he was taking the strains of modern 'crisis' living in a world context. Little wonder that he was nostalgic for the values of his adolescence: the isolation, the rugged individualism, the small town ethics, the parish pump politics, the village store economics, which made him clamour for that normalcy to which there could be no convincing return.

Again we are given succinct accounts of the infant growth of the new science of sociology, of the heyday of 'political science', of the rise of a new architecture, the handmaid of sociology rather than the fine arts, of the deepening of historical scholarship through a new awareness of social forces on the frontier, the farm, the factory and the city; but these are not explicitly related to that profound crisis which, as the author indicates in the introductory essay, made the period 1890-1920 a watershed radically affecting the character and direction of American life. The closing of the frontier, the problems of race assimilation and the shutting down on immigration, the problems of 'bigness' in economic and urban life, the outward turning of American vision to the problems of security in the external world: all these are symptomatic of the fact that America had ceased to be a process of settlement, the end-product of the expansion of Europe, and had become instead a finite nation with a major role in the struggle for world power. And although we may infer much about the character of that nation by reading between the lines, there is no schematic attempt to define the unique qualities which differentiate it absolutely from the societies of Europe. For whereas European society is still essentially customary, corporate, traditional, homogeneous, bound by loyalties to place and breeding, static in its attitude to change, American society is dynamic, mobile, radically experimental, eclectic and heterogeneous, and fluid in its social patterns. And those unique social conditions have inevitably produced a type of mind in abrupt contrast to that of western Europe. To concentrate, as Professor Commager does, upon 'intellectual' movements without relating them to the deeper and less articulate processes of American experience is to give a superficial and sometimes misleading impression of the American mind. It is important to say this for the English public because, whereas the American possesses the

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instinctive understanding to interpret the movements Professor Commager so ably describes, the Englishman, aware of the similarities to, and not of the differences from, his own intellectual tradition, may fail to grasp the fundamental uniqueness of the American outlook.

F. THISTLETHWAITE

BOOKS RECEIVED

The inclusion of any book in this list does not preclude its review in a later issue

M. S. ANDERSON: *Geography of Living Things*. Hodder & Stoughton, 8s. 6d. net.
 ERNEST BARKER: *Principles of Social and Political Theory*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 25s. net.

SULA BENET: *Song, Dance, and Customs of Peasant Poland*. Dobson, 18s. net.
 HIRAM BINGHAM: *Lost City of the Incas*. Phoenix House, 21s. net.

WILFRID BLUNT: *Black Sunrise*. Methuen, 21s. net.

VERA BRITAIN: *Search after Sunrise*. Macmillan, 15s. net.

ADRIAN COATES: *Prelude to History*. Methuen, 22s. 6d. net.

A. S. DIAMOND: *The Evolution of Law and Order*. Watts, 21s. net.

EDWIN FISCHER: *Reflections on Music*. Williams & Norgate, 5s. net.

E. M. FORSTER: *Two Cheers for Democracy*. Arnold, 21s. net.

L. REGINALD HINE: *Relics of an Un-common Attorney*. Dent, 18s. net.

I. V. HOMEWOOD: *Music in Further Education*. Dobson, 5s. net.

ARNOLD KETTLE: *An Introduction to the English Novel*. Hutchinson's University Library, 8s. 6d. net

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